Conservation Worrier

JAMIE KIRKPATRICK

DE PRESS INC
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PREFACE

There comes a tide in the affairs of most men when the flood is known to be missed. Sitting bound in the shallows and miseries one realises that one might have come occasionally hither and yon, but has not seen much, and certainly has not conquered. This realization implies that it is the time to write one’s memoirs.

Embarking on the autobiographical Odyssey, the voyager is sublimely unaware of the shoals and sirens that will leap from behind and, more alarmingly, down from, plinths. For, as Alcibiades discovered, knocking sacred phalli off plinths when under the influence of alcohol can end badly, in exile in Syracuse. So one has to be nice to the contents of plinths, one’s family and anyone likely to sue you, but still write something that will motivate others to read it. This is hard, as people do so like a nice malicious gossip directed towards celebrities or personal family members.

I idly thought that I could concentrate my publicity on my interactions with the few moderately famous people I have encountered on my Odyssey, but decided it was better to have no publicity at all, except that which eventuates through fortunate accident, in order to maintain my ideological purity, which is sullied enough.

Then it came to me – people always like someone with a good sense of humour, and what could be funnier than our cute little species soiling its nest, while dreaming of a cyborg future in shining air taxis, except for someone futilely trying to stop it happening, in Tasmania, of all places.

The trouble is, humour is serious stuff, so I ended up being ambushed by a need to report what happened, in all its serendipity.

Any humans unlucky enough to intersect with this book in the future can rest assured that its author has tried to avoid distorting history to make him look good. I do not even mention the many
awards and honours that have been showered upon me in profusion or details of more than a few of my weighty and less weighty past publications.

I do report on a lot of the previously unknown background roilings associated with the great education and conservations issues of our time; the secret messages between Ministers and conservationists; the dressings up for the media; and, the role of sewerage pipes in track construction; just a few of the new amazing but true facts hidden in these pages and elsewhere, as under tracks.

My childhood, adolescence and early adulthood were lived in the city of Melbourne, where it is almost impossible not to be a fashion co-ordinator when you grow up. I therefore have good grounds to plead fashion victim status. So, you have to forgive a certain degree of temporal disorganisation and the use of the third person.

I am grateful for critical perusals of the manuscript by Christina Kirkpatrick and Aidan Davison, help with the index for the printed version from Carly Rusden and Jen Styger, and help with practical things by Jen Sanger. Photographs are largely from my parents’ collection or were taken in the course of my work and leisure (often by others for me). Other photographs have their source acknowledged in the captions, or their source has been lost in the mists of time, or were kindly given to me by Roger Taylor (pp. 28, 31), Kerry Bridle (p. 54), Jon Marsden-Smedley (pp. 75, 127), Chris Harwood (p. 114), Tim O’Loughlin (pp. 162, 172, 183), Rob Blakers (p. 208), Paul Crowther (pp. 69, 91) and Rod Fensham (p. 222).

I thank my wonderful wife, Christina, the rest of my family, my colleagues and students at the University of Tasmania and my friends, many, but not all, of whom are featured in this book, for making life the joy reported herein.
CHAPTER ONE
BEING EDUCATED

Betty and Barry on their honeymoon

The timid child

The flattening of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by thermonuclear devices involved the incineration of many tens of thousands of their innocent peoples. This immoral act, and the advance of the Soviets from the north, is followed by the Japanese surrender in 1945, and, therefore, the end of World War II. Betty and Barry have been married for several years, but have desisted from reproduction in their world of extreme violence and uncertainty. They have concentrated on seeing films and playing
on the beach with friends. Optimism prevails in a happy holiday at the Mount Buffalo Chalet in January 1946. The foetus that is to become Jamie forms part of a complex biochemical reaction that gives his mother hay fever for the first time, the fever luckily responding to wattle blossom rather than to her son.

Jamie finds it difficult to emerge from the badly-designed small aperture connecting womb and world. The marks of the forceps are still visible as sparse spots in his half grey beard. In his persistent birth dream he struggles to get out of a narrowing cave, thwarted on a mission he cannot quite comprehend. He keeps out of real caves, unless they are ones with rashers of bacon and fairy castles, all nicely backlit, and even then he would rather not enter. ‘Why aren’t people marsupials rather than placentals?’ he thinks. ‘Marsupials have a much better design, saving on the cost of pushers and cots, as well as avoiding much physical distress on the parts of mother and child.’

_Betty, wondering what she has got into, Jamie and Rusty Coo-Coo at Elwood_
Betty, an intelligent, attractive and vivacious blue-eyed, blonde tomboy, is fonder of the company of males than females, so it may have been fortunate that Jamie belongs to the supposedly stronger sex. Betty bombards her lovely baby with talk and affection, in the company of Rusty Coo Coo, her protective cat, and sporty Barry, her loving husband. Until 1950, when they move to a detached wooden house in Tucker Road, Moorabbin, they live in a cream brick art deco flat in Elwood, just a short walk from Elwood Beach. A Harley-Davidson motor bike and side car is parked outside to take the family to the many cricket matches in which Barry plays. Barry slicks back his black hair, while Betty wears her hair elaborately long. Their large group of friends, most of whom are also reproducing, create the vanguard of the baby boom.

Jamie is a timid, scared, very impressionable child. His first memory is of a dark wooden cows head with bell which paralyses him with terror as he lays on his back in his cot. Whenever, as a child, he walks by himself in the dark he feels a crawling sensation in his back and a strong desire to run, a desire he resists through misplaced dignity and his susceptibility to asthma attacks after exertion. He lies terrified and rigid in his bed when first hearing the grunt-scream of a possum, imagining a rampaging giraffe. Although never seeing a conflagration as a child, he has repeated bush fire nightmares. Perhaps these dreams resulted from the coal that spat from Barry’s open fire and rested on his left leg, leaving an ellipsoid permanent scar.

**Hating health professionals**

Some of the unhappiest memories of the childhood of Jamie relate to the activities of benevolent health professionals. Doctor Forster has needles that look larger than Jamie’s arm and feel larger than the Norfolk Island pines behind the beach at Elwood. Jamie’s
permanent dislikes of art deco brick houses with rounded corners and porthole windows, diosmas, zonal geraniums and the smell of antiseptic solution, almost certainly derive from his visits to the Forster chambers. However, the real torture chamber is located high up in the T&G Building on Collins Street in the Melbourne Central Business District.

Barry and Jamie with Harley-Davidson

Jamie has to wait with his mother in a small dingy antechamber, the walls covered with fly-specked yellowish-cream paint, listening to the hideous whirr of the drill and the occasional muffled cry of pain. In a mindful moment, he thinks to himself: ‘my whole life is in this place’. His dentist, Mr Morrison, does not seem to be
a great believer in pain prevention. Anyway, his pain relief seems worse than the pain, as the giant needle plunges into the gum and the feeling of numbing poison exudes from it. It certainly does not stop the noise.

Jamie’s experiences of dentists are so bad that, once free of parental control, he avoids them for many decades. This is an unfortunate mistake, leading to more oral misery than would otherwise have been the case.

In his mid-fifties, a dentist, removing a decayed and painful tooth, can no longer stand Jamie’s whimpering and cringing. He offers Jamie laughing gas. Going to the dentist is now a pleasure. After a few times, Jamie does not need any gas. It is his tension causing the pain.

Sometimes Jamie can just barely breathe, even after ephedrine and Avil tablets. Doctor Forster refers him to Mr Gandevia, a dapper young respiratory specialist in East Melbourne. Apart from the embarrassment of having to produce a urine sample, nothing too awful happens. This is probably why Jamie is still fond of Victorian architecture and big, spreading deciduous trees. However, he suspects that Mr Gandevia may have been the source of the dreaded, and appropriately named, Miss Cosh.

‘Shoulders back, tail in’ Miss Cosh commands. Jamie could have managed this if he had realized that his tail was his bum, not his penis. Miss Cosh is also very keen for Jamie to spit up phlegm, an act he finds infinitely more disgusting than swallowing it, out of retch-inducing sight. She does teach Jamie a few useful skills. The exercise, ‘Balloons’, consists of breathing into the lower parts of his lungs. It helps during asthma attacks. Jamie quite likes ‘Boats’, which consists of lying on his stomach, grasping his ankles and rocking back and forth like a dinghy on Port Phillip Bay.
Miss Cosh tries to teach Jamie relaxation exercises, exercises now called meditation. It is a pity that communication difficulties make Jamie deeply suspicious of all that she says. Jamie is particularly worried when Miss Cosh gets enthusiastic, rather than just commanding. He thinks that she has cracked when she suggests that he think ‘calm-relax’ as he breathes in and out. How could that fix anything? The fact that she says that it helps her only confirms his resistance. ‘Just give me a pill, Miss Cosh’ he thinks to himself, instead of ‘calm-relax’.

The frequent squeeze of asthma has one positive outcome – Jamie has a lot of time at home in bed, rather than incarcerated in school. According to Mr Gandevia, allergies to house mites and grass pollen initiate many of his asthma attacks. Air pollution, mental stress and physical exercise he does not like could be added to the list. Jamie now suspects that his mind enlisted his body to say ‘no’ in situations in which boys were not allowed to say ‘no’.

The pleasures of languishing ill in bed are manifold. Jamie has his mother and the current cat to himself, can read without interruptions, is given comic books and other little presents, and can listen to day time radio on his crystal set. Surprisingly, given his strong desire to have flat feet so he could not go into the army, he also plays fantasy war games, drawing little stick figures as his soldiers.

**Hating primary school**

Jamie enjoys being at home with his mother. School is a terrible shock to his body-mind system. Bentleigh State School is his first alma mater. It becomes the site of various commercial ‘Universes’ after being sold when the wave of baby boomers crashes on the shores of adulthood. On the morning of his first day at school he feels the need to defaecate. He visits the toilet, but is terrorized
sufficiently by some older boys to be too afraid to enter. He heads off towards the safe toilet at home, more than a mile away. He does not make it in time, a suitable punishment for the mother who sent him off to this living hell, but highly mortifying for a well-behaved child. Surprisingly, his only other memory of this school is of a student playing a recorder, and thinking that he would like to be able to play one too.

While Jamie is being miserable at Bentleigh State School, a brand new metal school is rising from a market garden close to the Kirkpatrick house. This is the Tucker Road State School, in which Jamie is to be a student for most of his primary education.

The big advantage of Tucker Road State School is that Jamie can go home for lunch. On the few days on which Betty is not home at lunch time, Jamie is given some money and walks to the milk bar in South Road where he purchases salad sandwiches and a meringue. The salad sandwiches consist of two thin slices of the finest of fresh industrial white bread lightly buttered on one side. In the sandwich there are onion rings, beetroot slices, tomato slices,
a cheddar cheese slice and diced iceberg lettuce, all wetted with mayonnaise. The meringues are delightfully solid and crunchy, unlike the home-cooked varieties of the same, which are wet and sticky in the middle and not nearly as sweet.

Jamie learns some academic skills at primary school, like the mechanics of long division, but most of his learning takes place at home. The moment he catches on to reading is at the oblong table in the dark living room before he goes to school at all. Barry is sceptical when Jamie says he can do it, but he can.

Jamie becomes a compulsive reader. He is not allowed to read during family meals, a stricture he partly avoids by reading the cereal packet on the breakfast table. Jamie never tires of reading about the amount of niacin he is about to ingest. It is so much better than engaging with the real world. At school, teaching Jamie to read is obviously unnecessary. John and Betty is very boring for someone with a much more advanced taste in books.

He is taught how to write the right way, firstly print, then cursive. All 50 children in the class do the same task at the same time. ‘This is right way to connect a ‘t’ to an ‘a’. Write ‘ta’.’ Once having learned to print, he is never converted to cursive, although he performs cursively as required. ‘Never bother to learn anything you do not need to’ is his attitude.

Pleasing his teachers is the easy part of primary school. Granted, most of the things they get Jamie, and 49 others, to do seem pointless in the extreme, but most are ridiculously simple and reinforce his high self-esteem. Jamie performs extra well on spelling and arithmetic tests. The best way to learn to spell is to read and he has the practical experience of buying lollies at the milk bar to hone his accountancy skills.

He does less well on the few ‘creative’ components of the curriculum. Spelling and arithmetic are either right or wrong.
Where are the rules for finger painting, dioramas in shoe boxes or wood work?

His parents rather obviously do not care about these things. They make no secret of their belief that they are a waste of school time, or of their resentment at having to help Jamie find shoe boxes and things to put in them. Jamie takes his cue from them and does the minimum to keep his teachers from being annoyed.

*Barry attempting to teach Jamie physical skills (1955)*

Jamie has a major problem, for an Australian boy, of a lack of physical co-ordination. Although he humours his father by trying, largely unsuccessfully, to hit and throw the balls of which Barry is somewhat overfond, Jamie would rather be reading. The carpenter’s kit he got one birthday is not used once Jamie discovers how difficult it is to saw in a straight line and to get nails to
pene
penetrate wood, rather than forming arcs on contact of the hammer. Barry is the one who sets up the rails, stations, bridges and tunnels for Jamie’s green clockwork train and who gets most pleasure watching its circling. Jamie gets more pleasure from his father’s enjoyment than from the train.

Given his lack of facility in the area of carpentering, Jamie is shocked to learn that a substantial portion of class time in the latter years of primary school is to be devoted to ‘practical’ work, to prepare the dumber children who are destined for the ‘Tech’. The inspired solution is the match tray. Someone else cuts out the square of masonite on to which the matches are to be adhered. Barry draws the squares on to the masonite that are to be the guidelines for adherence and Jamie devises internal patterns for each of the squares.

This is to be a truly monumental work, lasting until the end of Jamie’s wood work career, when someone else puts on the metal handles. Jamie’s teacher does get slightly impatient, once, at the glacial rate of his progress. Jamie temporarily speeds up, then, relapses to proper consideration of the place of every match.

Jamie has always been quite proud of the tray in a life somewhat lacking in physical outputs, although it has never been used in anger, or otherwise. Either this sense of achievement, or the addictive qualities of the smell of the glue, results in his recreation of constructing models of ships and planes from expensive plastic sets purchased from the newsagent. It is the bribe of one of these sets that impels Jamie to go from a poor mark to 100% in mathematics in successive tests in the second year of secondary school. Betty refuses to bribe him thereafter.

School is not only the pretence of formal learning. There is also the induction of socially appropriate values and behaviours, not the least of which is training children to undertake meaningless tasks
within externally determined time frames. At morning assembly in the yard, children stand to attention in military rows while the national anthem, *God Save the Queen*, plays, and then salute the flag. These activities induce sufficient patriotism in Jamie to result in a state of shock when Betty and Barry just keep on chatting when the national anthem blares from the car radio half way to one of the beaches the family so frequently visits. They tell Jamie to not take it so seriously, advice that conflicts with the moral of many of the stories he has read in the *Reader’s Digest* cache in the cupboard in the living room. They are lucky that they do not live in America, where Jamie could have accused them of being communists, or in a communist country, where he could have accused them of being capitalist roaders.

*Drew and Jamie at the beach again. Jamie in CEBS shirt (1955).*

After saluting the flag, the next patriotic task is to support the Australian dairy industry by drinking a small bottle of milk. During the very hot days of summer, crates of this liquid sit outside, with the heavy yellow cream migrating solidly to the top of the silver
paper capped bottle. To one used to milk from the fridge, and not in state of semi-starvation, drinking this beverage is a disgusting experience. The disgust is mitigated somewhat by bringing to school a certain type of straw, which releases a chemically sweet taste, and an attractive pastel colour, into the fatty warm colloidal suspension.

Occasionally, the teachers give their charges a glimpse of the broader society. There must have been one music teacher for all the State schools in Victoria. Jamie enjoys her visit to his class, especially as she is kind enough to say that he has a good singing voice.

At home, laughter follows his proud restatement of her judgement. Thereafter, until middle age, Jamie makes a point of singing out of tune in public, a skill used to good effect in singing hymns during the morning assemblies at his secondary school.

In another glimpse, Jamie’s class is walked en masse along South Road to visit a junk yard. In an experience more suited to his temperament, some of the more introverted children are taken to visit a woman author who lives near the beach at Seaford. She is in her seventies and lives with her mother, who is in her nineties. They have a quiet, considered manner, books are everywhere and their Victorian-era house is dark and cool, sitting hidden within a leafy garden that lacks lawns. Jamie feels that this house is more a place for him than the glare of bookless, new Moorabbin with its tight, tidy green lawns.

There is also a rather mystifying time when a man comes to teach the class about the Christian religion, a topic not usually raised in a secular school. He has a very nice line in black velvet to which he sticks figures of various biblical characters, using some precursor of Velcro. Jamie is fascinated by the technology and wants more, but the man never re-appears.


Hating Sunday school

Barry is brought up without religion and never wavers in his disbelief. Betty is a High Anglican, until she realizes that the wafer she is eating is literally meant to be the flesh of Jesus Christ. Very open-mindedly, Jamie’s parents want their children to be in a position to make their own choices re cannibalism.

Jamie is sent to Sunday school at the nearest Anglican church. He is both bored and bewildered. He wonders why the class prays for ‘the holy catholic church’ when they are obviously not Catholics.

The major impact of Sunday school on his life is that somehow he is induced to ask his parents if he could join the Church of England Boys Society (CEBS).

Betty and Barry are a bit dubious about it, exhibiting better judgement than Jamie. They make Jamie promise that he will persist with CEBS for at least two years, presumably long enough to amortise the cost of the uniform.

CEBS is Boy Scouts for Anglicans, with a blue rather than khaki uniform. CEBS is choking dust in an echoing hall filled with medicine balls, weaving lanyards for key rings out of brightly coloured plastic thread, the Lord’s Prayer and the camp on Stink Bomb Creek, where the disgusting custard has a brown skin two inches deep and it is hard to see through the mosquitoes in the barracks at dusk.

CEBS gives Jamie a lot of asthma, but no-one sexually molests him, or anyone else, that he notices. His two years in CEBS are made even more painful in that television arrives in Melbourne soon after he starts, and Jet Jackson conflicts with medicine balls and lanyard-making. In one of his life’s great tragedies Jamie is never to see a single episode.
Ambivalence about recreation

Nineteen fifty-six is an important year in the history of Melbourne. It is the year of television and the Olympic Games, two not totally unlinked phenomena. Before television the Kirkpatrick family has a radio and a record player. When Jamie comes home at lunch time, Betty listens to Blue Hills and the Country Hour, neither of which Jamie can fully comprehend.

After returning from school in the afternoon, he is allowed to listen to the Argonauts, a children’s show well-suited to the progeny of professors of classics, but not to those children restricted to the Reader’s Digest and Arthur Mee’s Children’s Encyclopaedia. At last, at six, Jamie is allowed to switch to the commercial station for Hop Harrigan – ‘control to CX4’, but cannot listen to the more exciting serials thereafter, as dinner is on, and dinner is family conversation time.

When Jamie gets his crystal set, he lies in bed at night listening to the quiz shows, including Jack Dyer of Pick a Box with his ‘Hi-ho customers’, or to horror stories that make him hide beneath his sheets, a method also effective in minimising mosquito bites.

Sometimes in the evenings the family listens to music. At first, this emanates from a wind-up player of 78 records, with large metal needles. ‘There’s a small hotel, with a wishing well, I wish that we were there, together’ sticks in Jamie’s mind.

The next record player deals with 33s. These fit all the songs from a musical comedy, like Kismet, or a medley from the Swingle Singers. The breaks between songs are smooth circles on the black vinyl discs.

Betty and Barry are fond of musical comedies and Noel Coward plays, to which Jamie is taken. When very young, Jamie has a dim memory of watching what must have been a vaudeville performance at the Tivoli, in which the comedian, Mo, is one of the
stars. The performance includes painted naked women pretending to be statues, as close as Melbourne gets to being risqué in the fifties.

![Image of Jamie, Drew and Betty conquering the Monolith, Mt Buffalo (1956). Barry was probably being difficult at the time.]

Being in a theatre is a form of torture for Jamie, who has internalised the idea that farting in public is the ultimate in heinous crimes. Five milliseconds after he is trapped in his seat, his bowels automatically send the excess gas message to his brain. His sphincter muscles then have to be directed to adopt a constant override of the unconscious command to expel gaseous waste.

His bowels retaliate by inducing sharp pains that cause him to wriggle, and almost lose conscious control. It is as if the constrained social context of the theatre squeezes his innards. His bowels are quite happy at the cricket or at an Australian Rules
football match, perhaps sensing that any indiscretion is highly likely to be masked by the rowdy, smelly crowd.

It is a wonder that his bowels work at all. The main meal at chez Kirkpatrick consists largely of meat, alternatively steak and chops, with a roast on Sundays. Mashed potato and an over-boiled green vegetable accompanied the dead animal, except on Sunday when the potato is roasted.

Jamie hates peas and pumpkin, both of which make him feel bilious. Home-made ice cream is the most frequent sweet. This tends to be horribly icy, lacking the alginates that give smoothness to the commercial product. White bread, butter and a sweet spread are the fillers.

This recipe for constipation is relieved in summer and autumn by a profusion of ripe fruit obtained from the greengrocer in the Tucker Road shops and from the back yard. Jamie particularly likes stone fruit and seedless grapes. He fills his mouth with hard yellow grapes, then crunches them all at once.

Before the first television broadcasts in 1956, people gather outside shop windows watching the flickering test pattern on the cute little screens. The Kirkpatricks are the first of a close-knit group of neighbours to get one, as Barry wants to watch the broadcasts of the Olympic Games.

A crowd of neighbours assembles in the living room to watch people lift and throw various things, or just run or swim. One night, a thief walks in the front door and removes some belongings while all ingest the new opium of the masses.

Jamie and Drew are allowed to have a day off school to go and see some of the Olympics at the MCG with Barry and Betty. Jamie’s main memory is of the giant pillar directly to the front of his seat in the Southern Stand. Jamie has begun to suspect that sport is more important than school work, a suspicion later to be strongly
reinforced by his secondary school. His main sporting fantasy in his primary school years involves mentally directing the course of the omnipresent ball, thereby avoiding the obvious physical dangers of football and cricket, while scoring heaps of runs or goals.

In reality, when boys choose teams, Jamie is seldom in them, and, when in them, last chosen. It is a good thing that he likes playing with girls, who have much more interesting conversations and games than most of the boys with whom he is acquainted.

In 1956, Melbourne probably deserves Ava Gardner’s apocryphal ascerbic comment after acting in *On the Beach*: ‘A great place to make a film about the end of the world’. The night life is minimal and the few restaurants stodgy. There are large sections of the sprawling suburbs where alcohol is prohibited from sale, and where it is sold, it is only up to 6 pm. Shops close at noon on Saturday, to reopen on Monday morning.

On Saturday afternoon, sport is king. During winter, huge tribal crowds in festive dress fill the stands at football grounds, releasing emotions held within for the rest of the week. The only places open on Sunday are churches and the Museum. There are social divisions based on class, religion and ethnic origin.

Jamie’s grandmothers regard Roman Catholics as inferior beings. ‘Blue and green should never be seen, excepting on an Irish Queen’, and, presumably, Jamie thinks, in scenery. Even his tolerant father, who is by now an executive in the MacRobertson’s chocolate empire, makes occasional negative remarks about ‘Scottish shop stewards’.

**School and place snobbery**

Private schools in Melbourne are called public schools. ‘Newspeak’ is alive and well in Melbourne well before the term
was coined. Melbourne Grammar, Scotch College and Geelong Grammar are the public schools in which the male progeny of the rich establish lifelong networks of influence and polite corruption. A phalanx of lesser public schools, and other private schools, called grammar schools, soak up the upper middle class overflow. Until the 1970s, universities are only available for the children of the rich and a few lucky scholarship holders. Barry is one of these in the 1930s, after gaining access to a competitive entry State High School from a State Primary School.

Barry’s educational history makes him highly resistant to most of the prevailing Melbourne snobbery, which is based on school, suburb and money. Moorabbin is definitely not a suburb befitting Barry’s status in life, but he refuses to move to the more prestigious coastal suburbs, unlike the close friends he and Betty make when all are starting off their home-owning life on or near Tucker Road.

Barry and Betty are not as one on the subject of the secondary school Jamie is to attend. Both of them enjoyed school more than home, but Betty’s secondary school was ‘public’ and Barry’s was not. He also hates spending money.

In his last year at Tucker Road State School Jamie is sent to sit for a large number of scholarship examinations. Betty and Barry hope that Jamie will get one, thereby relieving them of a very hard decision.

Jamie wants to go to the local State High School with his classmates and friends. He enjoys not being at school more than being at school, although he has learned to cope with Tucker Road State School.

_The horror of growing up_

Jamie does not want to grow up. Being grown up seems so difficult, dangerous and unpleasant. How does his father manage to get from
home to remote places in his motor car? And back? How could Jamie possibly earn enough money to buy even his lollies and comics when his highly competent father obviously does not have enough of it? If Jamie did get a job, how would he bear the 40 hours a week it required?

Barry (second from left, top row) as a prefect at the competitive entry University High

Jamie has no model of enjoyable work. Barry totally separates work and home life, giving the accurate impression that home life is his life, and work his means to have a home life. He refers to himself as ‘chained to the capitalist desk’ and frequently says ‘no-one wishes on their death bed that they had spent more time at work’.

Jamie is terrified by the prospect of being forced to fight in a war. He closely peruses his Brigadier grandfather’s illustrated histories of World War I and World War II. He thinks that there is no way that he would last more than ten minutes in anything like that. He
would go mad with fear. How could he possibly put on a tie? Shoe laces are hard enough.

Girls seem to have it easier than blokes. They are only expected to be nice to others and do a bit of cooking and cleaning at their own pace, then they garden and socialize to their heart’s content. They are not expected to fight in any of the stupid wars that Australia seems to constantly engage in at the behest of Great Britain or the United States, or wear ties. They also seem to be brighter than blokes, and in control of most families, either subtly or explicitly.

For a while Jamie experiments with tucking his penis and testes behind his legs. It is obviously not going to work, especially when in the last years of primary school he starts to get highly pleasurable dreams in which he is definitely not a girl.

**Hating secondary school**

Jamie receives no scholarships. He is sent to Haileybury College, three miles away, on South Road in Brighton. Haileybury is a Presbyterian boy’s school, desperate to gain a reputation as one of the great public schools. Jamie finds it a place of almost constant terror and unpleasantness.

In later life he is told that the headmaster, ‘Donk’ to the students, was an army subordinate of his Brigadier grandfather. This probably explains the choice, and the soon-abandoned attempts by the teachers to give Jamie positions of responsibility. The tie problem immediately manifests itself. After six months of practice, helped by Barry, Jamie finally gets the idea.

At Tucker Road State School, Jamie is upset to see his teacher soap out the mouth of a disobedient small girl, whose vernacular vocabulary is well in advance of her years. He also suffers for a few days from the Tartar reign of yellow-toothed, red-haired Mr Monty, who ran the Monty household in which Drew and Jamie
are briefly decamped when Betty and Barry go away somewhere. Although Barry always wonders why Mrs Monty left Mr Monty, ‘when he was so good to her’, Jamie does not.

These few touches of evil are a poor preparation for Haileybury. It soon becomes apparent that one can be beaten up by teachers at their whim. Although most teachers prove on experience to be non-violent, Jamie dreads having to be exposed to the whimsical ones in their occasional hour long periods. There are rules and rules and rules, even extending to one’s appearance and behaviour when one is not in the prison camp.

The inmates have to wear a ridiculous magenta cap, straight out of Billy Bunter. The rule is that this cap and the blazer, a heavy coat garnished with magenta, are to remain on between home and school and school and home, no matter what the weather or how many rough High School boys are mocking you.

‘Haileybury College, stinks like porridge’ is the cry from the barbarians at the gates. Jamie silently disagrees, but only because he loves the smell of porridge.

Jamie suspects that the basic educational philosophy at Haileybury is similar to that used to turn people into soldiers – get them more scared of the people behind them than the ones in front, develop camaraderie through mutual suffering and, through ceaseless repetition in training, induce them to perform life-threatening actions like an automaton.

Indeed, Haileybury is trying to turn boys into soldiers. Cadets is compulsory, except for the limited few who are Queen Scouts, or so physically, mentally or religiously disabled that they have to be placed in Social Services. Jamie’s worst nightmare is segueing into reality.

He is saved for a while by the match tray response. Jamie volunteers to learn the bagpipes. The members of the pipe band are
spared both shooting with 303 rifles at silhouettes of people and long route marches with heavy gear. They get to wear a kilt, sporran, spats and a hat slightly less silly than the school cap. Jamie loves the sporran with its long horse hair beard, and the feeling of freedom given by wearing a skirt.

The pipe band also plays at many festive occasions when there is a good chance of meeting girls, who, Jamie hopes, might be curious about what lays under the kilt. Could it be as magnificent as the sporran? One day Jamie tries wearing the kilt without underpants. The wool used in kilts turns out to be abrasive and urine spots do not look too great on white spats.

Learning to play the chanter is not excessively difficult. Eventually, Jamie plays *Scotland the Brave* in his sleep. The only trouble is getting any noise to emerge from the bagpipes. Jamie never masters the art of co-ordinating blowing, squeezing and chantering, although he easily imitates the motions.

It takes more than a year of fetes before his subterfuge is recognized. His sporran, spats and kilt are taken from him, and he is placed in ‘Intelligence’ with some of the other misfit intellectuals. In ‘Intelligence’, the dumber serious boys, who have appropriately been made sergeants or lieutenants, teach the intellectuals how to do Morse code. Disappointingly for Jamie, there are none of the pigeons that feature in his grandfather’s war books.

Jamie almost enjoys his first cadet camp at Puckapunyal with the irreverent and smutty musicians in the pipe band, who introduce him to the delights of *Playboy* centrefolds. He manages to induce in himself a very severe asthma attack in order to get withdrawn from his second Puckapunyal camp, and is ignominiously placed in Social Services.
His first job in Social Services is to paint the house of a World War I veteran, who, like most people who have suffered the dire fate of being a soldier in combat, only wants to forget their experiences, but cannot.

![Jamie at Cadet Dance with Glenda Nance (1963)](image)

Sport is as compulsory as war at Haileybury, but more important. Prestige within the group of public schools has an academic component, judged by results in the matriculation tests. However, there is no doubt that performance in cricket, football and rowing count for much more than the achievements of the swots. In the great hall at morning assembly, the headmaster salivates over any sporting victory. The best sporting boys are given colours for their blazer pockets.

At one stage, the head finds it necessary to berate his assembly of boys for their lack of sufficient ‘school spirit’ to motivate them to attend the great football and cricket contests with other public schools. Attendance is made compulsory, and cheer squads are set up by the teachers, with quisling boys appointed as cheer leaders.
During the 1960s, Haileybury, a long established school, but a relatively new recruit to the group of public schools, is building up its student numbers, and thereby steadily increasing the calibre of its performances in cricket and football. The school has not yet invested in sculls. What it does invest in is professional coaching. This involves some cross-subsidization. Jamie’s third form science class, the top stream, is taken by the professional football coach, who tells the class not to bother him with questions, just read the textbook and answer the questions at the end of each chapter.

By his late years at Tucker Road State School Jamie finds a sport in which he can perform semi-proficiently, one of the rare ones that his father has never played. This is hockey. He is a member of one of the boy’s teams that play for the St Kilda Hockey Club each Saturday in winter. Haileybury makes him play in one of their hockey teams, as well as enforcing the rigors of practice, eating up some of his precious after school evenings.

He resents practice and having to leave St Kilda to play for the school team, but does enjoy the games that the school team plays, especially the annual match with the girl’s public school on the other side of South Road.

Jamie is shocked that he is eventually good enough at hockey to be selected in the Public Schools’ team that plays the High Schools’ team each year. His surprising proficiency at hockey leaves the problem of a warm season sport. Jamie starts off with tennis, which has a nice soft ball. However, like most balls, it refuses to behave for Jamie in the presence of an instructor.

His social circle includes jocks as well as intellectuals. Although Jamie’s best friends are intellectuals, Barry provides an excellent example of the ways in which one interacts positively with jocks. The jocks need someone who is amusing, but also conscientious, and able to count, for the job of school cricket scorer. Jamie is
selected when the previous incumbent, famed for his ability to buy condoms and alcohol without being caught by the teachers, leaves Haileybury, undoubtedly to make his fortune.

The job pays, as the scorer has the responsibility of communicating the results of home games to the Melbourne newspapers, which reciprocate with small cheques. No more wild backhand misses, no more embarrassing successions of double faults, just shady rooms beneath scoreboards on grounds surrounded by leafy deciduous trees, the filling in of dots, crosses and numbers among the beautiful green lines of the large score sheets, participation in the camaraderie of the first XI, and money.
Despite sorting out the compulsory sport in what should have been his own time, Jamie still has to endure Physical Education, which he hates and dreads. There is the dust-filled hall familiar from CEBS, but with a new range of torture devices. In one of his few acts of direct disobedience, Jamie refuses to attempt a somersault on a device called a horse. Maintaining his reputation as a good boy is not worth risking breaking his neck. After all, he cannot even do a somersault on the mats on the floor of the gym.

Monkey-faced Mr Williamson says to Jamie afterwards in his American accent ‘you don’t like me, do you?’ This upsets Jamie deeply. The only thing worse than farting in public is hurting other people’s feelings. Jamie actually does not hate him, just the school as a whole, and, especially, the activities he wants Jamie to do.

Jamie hates running, which invariably gives him an asthma attack. Cross country runs are the worst. He not only has hideous difficulty in breathing, but has to keep going to get back in time, to avoid the possibility of detention or beating.

Jamie resolves that he will flee school if ever he is to be beaten, and refuse to return. However, he wishes to avoid confrontation with his parents, who seem to think that the school is good for him in some mysterious way.

Early in his Haileybury life, Jamie vows to himself to do the opposite of everything the school wants him to do or be, once free. He never runs after leaving school for the last time.

On the academic front, Haileybury releases Jamie from the stagnation of his later years at Tucker Road. He is good at memorizing, so does well in most tests and examinations, of which there are many. He is particularly interested in Geography, as he develops a map obsession in his pre-teen years. Barry rescues a Harmsworth World Atlas, published in 1906, that had belonged to the founder of MacRobertson’s Chocolates. Jamie still possesses
this volume which continues to stir his emotions. The maps are exquisitely beautiful, with a lot of pink, designating a British Empire that, from both the atlas and many of the books in his grandfather’s library at Macedon, Jamie half suspects might still exist. He is interested in rivers and cities and capitals and rutile and why moss grows on the north side of trees in the northern hemisphere, an interest that overwhelms the dullness of the chalk and talk teaching.

While finding Geography, History and English easy, Jamie finds it more difficult to learn French and Latin. He cannot see any likely use, or pleasure, in them. He takes terrible, counterproductive short cuts, like memorizing a published translation of the whole of a Latin text from which excerpts were to be translated in an exam. Vidi, vini, vinci, I came, I saw, I conquered. But, never mind. He remembers the first line to a sufficient degree to be able to allude to it in the preface of this book.

Mathematics suddenly leaves his comfort zone, becoming a meaningless ritual with numbers, rather than a device to solve real world problems, because no-one informs him how things like differential equations can be used.

He finds Science highly frustrating. So, gravity varies with the mass and distance of objects. He thinks that there must be something behind this statement that he cannot grasp.

No-one tells him that it is an empirical relationship that just is. In his later years at school he finds Economics a bit easier to understand. At least there are human behavioural reasons behind all those graphs, even though many seem misconceptions when viewed in the light of the behaviour of people that Jamie knows.

While Jamie does well academically at school, constantly being in the top four in almost all academic subjects, this is largely because he can successively abandon the areas he begins to find difficult,
except for French. He has to do French because he wants to enrol in a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Melbourne, where one foreign language is required.

The French teacher at Haileybury does not make any serious attempt to get his students to speak the language, despite the oral component in the matriculation exam. Then again, Jamie does not make any serious attempt to rectify the gaps in his education. He is dedicated to minimizing the input he makes to school, including the academic input.

![About to leave the Haileybury Grounds (silly cap not yet on)](image)

Jamie is outraged in his first year at Haileybury to learn that the teachers expect him to work at home, as well as at school.
Homework had never manifested itself at Tucker Road State School, and Jamie has too many interesting and enjoyable things to do at home to even consider doing the boring tasks he is set. He does his homework at school, mostly in class, but sometimes under the stairs before assembly, just before it is due. During the whole of his student life, at Haileybury and at the University of Melbourne, the only school activity undertaken at home is study for exams. Cramming is confined to the week or two before the exams hit. As far as written work is concerned, his attitude is to do the minimum necessary. Written work is not counted in results, so why bother?

The life-threatening automatic actions that Haileybury students are being trained for on the academic front are regurgitations of the ‘right’ answers to the questions likely to be posed in the matriculation examinations. Your performance in these examinations decides whether you can go on to the course of your choice at the university of your choice, and if so, whether you can get a scholarship to defray the substantial fees.

Understanding does not appear to be the point of it all. Rather, Jamie perceives it as an arcane ritual of passage in an obstacle course that has already consumed 12 years of his life, and could consume many more. He is very well aware that the prize of an easy middle class life depends on his ability to accurately read the requirements of the ritual.

Public schools pride themselves in getting good results for those of moderate to poor intellectual endowment. Their obsession with the accurate regurgitation of detail does not benefit Jamie. He is given the impression that the weight and accuracy of this detail, not considered and informed responses to a series of arbitrary questions, will bring him fame and fortune. Consequently, Jamie does only as well in the matriculation examination as some of his relatively dumb jock friends who he helped cram. He feels
humiliated. However, his results are sufficient to gain him the choice of a Commonwealth Scholarship, which pays the fees, but does not give a living allowance, because Barry is too well-off, or a Studentship with the Education Department that not only pays the fees, but also has a stipend.

The cost of a stipend is commitment to three years of teaching after graduation from BA (Hons) and DipEd from the University of Melbourne. Financial independence beckons. The latter is chosen.

Judging by the performances, it must have been difficult to get competent teachers when the Baby Boomers hit the secondary schools. Only Bugsy Ennis, the English teacher, does anything for Jamie that he would have wanted and could not have done for himself. Bugsy, while dignified in his well-laundered black cloak, is younger than most of the other teachers. Unlike them, he is not averse to making his classes interesting, and he is not tainted by cadets, sport, advocacy of school spirit or zealotry in haircut inspections. The speed reading course Bugsy teaches is the most useful thing Jamie does at Haileybury, although it proves costly once Jamie has enough money to start buying books.

Although Jamie hates Haileybury, and has nightmares about it for a decade after his last non-regretful glance at the naked cherub in the fountain and the spreading Moreton Bay fig tree, the school does teach him a lot about authoritarianism, hypocrisy, terror and thought control.

Haileybury, in combination with his wide reading for pleasure and school work, makes him permanently distrustful of any pronouncement from persons in position of authority, and of persons in authority. *Animal Farm, 1984* and *Brave New World* seem to be written about Haileybury, and Ancient History, taught by Weary Clark, provides further insights. So, Alcibiades was exiled from Athens for knocking sacred phalluses off plinths in a
mad drunken moment with his mates? Sacred phalluses? Thanks to Haileybury, Jamie perfects the arts of passive resistance, cynicism, iconoclasm, keeping his own counsel and bypassing rules.

Last assembly before last non-regretful glance. Barry Taylor over Jamie’s shoulder. Randy Jackson to left of Barry. Hand belongs to Lou Costello. Geoff Budge on right. Neil Bell to his right.

Jamie refuses to be an ‘old boy’, rejecting invitations to visit and inspire future generations of scholars, and to participate in ‘old boys’ sporting teams.

In the early noughties, after a gap of a few decades, he starts to receive missives from the school. Jamie has been selected as one of the ‘One Hundred Great Haileyburians’. His best friend at school, Barry Taylor, the perpetual dux of his year, has also been selected. Like Jamie, Barry has experienced some minor unworldly success in academia. His younger brother, Roger, is highly successful in the business world. Barry emails Jamie: “Roger begged me to intercede to get him on the list, as it was obviously
an unfortunate oversight. I replied: ‘who am I to intercede with the wise men (sic!) of Haileybury – they obviously have explored the matter in some depth, and come to, what seems to me, an appropriate outcome.’” While Barry may have advanced the matter, to further feed his sense of humour, Jamie still ignores all correspondence from his alma mater 3.

So, why does Jamie commit himself to becoming a teacher? It definitely is not that he wants to be like Bugsy Ennis, or any other of the teachers he has experienced. It is definitely not because he thinks that teaching is a noble profession that does much good in the world. The aphorism ‘those who can, do; those that cannot, teach’ summarises his attitude. It is largely because of the holidays, and secondarily because, judging from the advanced age of many of his teachers, it seems a secure occupation – no queueing on the bread line during the next depression.

Jamie has not come across any paid work that seems desirable. He assumes that all paid work is miserable. Teaching will maximize his real life. Jamie perceives a few problems in becoming a teacher. He has seen student teachers destroyed by his fourth form class. Teachers are not paid all that well, judging by the few of their houses he has seen. Schools are definitely not convivial institutions. But, all the other institutions he has experienced, except perhaps for libraries, are not on the convivial side of life, and libraries are not offering studentships.

**Enjoying university**

Jamie has heard about the freedom of university. He wants it, and he wants to learn in areas he wants to learn, not those selected for him as part of the obstacle course. The area he is most interested in learning about is Plant Geography, combining an interest in the bush with his obsession for maps.
Perusing the handbooks for Monash and Melbourne, the only two options for Geography, Jamie notes that it is only Melbourne that has units in Plant Geography, so he heads in that direction. Melbourne University has BA degrees in which a student has to choose their honours specialization on first enrolment. Jamie naturally chooses Geography. The rules of the degree require him to do a language, at least in first year. He chooses the easiest of the French subjects, and, unadventurously, Ancient History and Economics to complete the first year slate.

French 1A is the subject Jamie most fears failing. Luckily, it is a unit devoted to French literature, and not anything to do with actually speaking or understanding the language. The lecturers are contemptuous of the students, as they cannot go on in French, but it must have been a great earner for them, as it consists only of lectures, and has a large market captured by the degree rules.

Ancient History is not as easy as Jamie anticipates. The tutorials end up being his major embarrassment for the year. Somehow, something Jamie says makes the young, enthusiastic tutor think that Jamie had studied ancient Greek. Jamie is incapable of correcting him. He selects Modern History in second year just to escape this mortification.

Economics is a bit more like school. It is a subject largely for the jocks who are doing Commerce degrees. Paper planes occasionally fly through the air of the huge lecture theatre, causing the lecturer to become apoplectic, thereby entertaining the jocks. Exercises are set for tutorials, in which the roll is taken. The worst moment in the year is when the tutor gloats that Essendon, his team, has beaten St Kilda, Jamie’s team, in the Victorian Australian Rules Football grand final.

The only time-consuming subject is Geography, which has a three hour practical class. Jamie is usually able to complete the task
within two hours, then leave. He looks forward to the physical geography lectures, but is sorely disappointed. The lecturer tells the class that he did not want anyone coming to ask him questions, and he is not even a football coach!

Despite the low quality of the teaching, first year at the University of Melbourne is a delight. Because there is virtually no continuous assessment, Jamie effectively has three and a half days of free time, in which to explore the many libraries hidden deep in the recesses of the campus. His favourite library is in the Botany School. The furniture is old, dark and polished. Many books sit within shelves enclosed within glass doors. The Geology Library is also excellent, obviously not having been modified physically for several eons. The main library is awful, full of chattering students and metal shelves. Jamie reads almost at random, luxuriating in the wealth of material.

In first year he is fond of counter lunches, enjoyed, with a beer or two, at one of the many public houses that surround the university grounds. He probably does not digest his reading as well in the afternoon as in the morning. His favourite hotel, Tom Ford’s Turf Club, has an aviary, with pigeons, in its beer garden. Pigeon is on the menu. He never eats it, as pigeons do not appear to have much meat on them.

Jamie’s performance in the sudden death examinations at the end of the year, held on wobbly tables in the Great Hall of the Exhibition Building as rats run across the rafters, is adequate to continue in honours, but not great.

Jamie does well in a practice examination in Geography when answering questions that are outside the areas on which he had concentrated his revision, but in which he is widely read. However, at the end of the year, with a mountain of detail temporarily in his brain on all topics, his performance is suboptimal. Jamie thinks that
his failure to top the class, an outcome he desperately desires, is a product of insufficient devotion to his studies.

Those who do better than him seem to spend their whole lives on their university work. It is also possible that the few other students that do better than him are more intelligent in the IQ kind of way. Jamie is not a MENSA man.

By second year, Jamie figures out that no-one notices if you do not attend crowded lectures; more time for unstructured reading and a social life. He also comes to the conclusion that a life as a university lecturer would be far superior to a life as a teacher. The contact
hours are tiny, there is virtually nothing to mark, and no-one seems to care how competent, or otherwise, you are at teaching.

The prevailing technique is the casting of badly-tarnished pearls among swine. Some lecturers just read from their own books, or from the books of others. As he discovers through his wide reading, this is sometimes without acknowledgement. Once, he gets the same lecture twice.

Most of the rest of their time at work academics seem to amuse themselves by following up personal interests. Jamie sees them in their offices reading books and papers, or writing slowly on yellow foolscap pads.

Social life does not seem to be neglected. At 12:30 pm, a phalanx of Geography staff sets off slowly from the Redmond Barry Building to the Staff Club, where, Jamie accurately imagines, they indulge in long, sumptuous, social lunches with much imbibing of alcohol.

Jamie’s first overnight excursion in Geography takes place in second year. The class is taken on a bus tour of the Riverina, guided by some of the more senior of the academics. Jamie cannot work out the point of it, but that is nothing new. At one of the very few stops, on the edge of a large patch of salt bush, the class is told to listen to the silence. All Jamie hears is the buzz of flies.

When, in the evening, one of the senior academics asks Jamie what he plans to do with his life, he replies that he wants to be an academic. The academic laughs and says that he would not advise it. Jamie’s arithmetic also suggests that it is not a feasible goal.

He works out how many Geography academics there are, how often a position comes up, and how many people are likely to be ahead of him in the queue. Not a great prospect. He does not factor in the Menzies government and the baby boom.
In second year, Jamie gets to know some of the academic staff in Geography, through the special honours subject. He also discovers that Plant Geography, his reason for being there, is only offered to BSc students, and clashes with the Geography of Europe, a compulsory part of the BA course, given by the Professor of Geography, John Andrews. The best that he can negotiate is to be allowed to sit in on the lectures on Plant Geography, while sitting the examination on the Geography of Europe, most of the lectures of which he cannot attend. It is a mercy not to attend the lectures, as John Andrews is glacially slow in his delivery.

The Plant Geography class can, and does, sit around a tutorial table. There is nothing glacial about Bob Parsons, who gives his class a thorough grounding in autecology, rather than traditional plant geography. Fresh from his PhD in Botany, wearing thongs and open-necked shirt, gentle, considerate and passionate, Bob brings Jamie into the academic fold. He not only has a subject he loves, but also a mentor to imitate.

It is not much point imitating Bob when the Education Department sends Jamie to get work experience at Melbourne High, one of the two competitive high schools. Thongs and open-necked shirts are not on.

The students are fiercely intelligent, soon exposing manifold deficiencies in the knowledge of their student teacher. Jamie tries to deflect and obfuscate, but it does not work. From then on, in all his teaching, he cheerfully admits ignorance when ignorance pertains, then, asks back at the students, often learning from the answers, and, at least, getting some class participation.

In third year, Jamie is fortunate to get a series of stimulating lectures on conservation from Eric Bird. These are presented with an unusual modicum of life, using slides, rather than chalk, as
visual aids. This is close to the first time that issues relevant to current political discourse are given an airing in lectures.

Eric also takes the class on an excursion to the Gippsland Lakes. As well as being shown features and phenomena, the attendees are given information collection tasks of various kinds. Eric gets the class to map erosion and deposition on parts of the coast, without really giving any rationale for the activity. Someone else drops students off in the countryside, where they are meant to map land use, for some unknown reason. The rub is that the students are expected to write up a research report on some of this information. As seems to be normal in all education in the 1960s, no guidance whatsoever is given, apart from size and time parameters. Students are supposed to absorb what to do from the ether.

Bob Parsons, Jamie and legal drugs in garden at Black Rock
In Jamie’s first bit of research, ever, he looks at bush remnants on the farms, and comes to the conclusion that their patterning is random, a product of a series of individual decisions on the parts of the landowners. The idea is alright, but could not be tested by the data, beyond observing that there was no pattern related to environment. Jamie enjoys this activity much more than writing the very occasional essay he has to produce, and looks forward to his honours thesis in fourth year.

Because Jamie had sat in on Bob’s lectures, he is able to make a successful case for doing his thesis under Bob’s supervision. This outcome does not please the senior member of staff who refused to answer any questions in first year. When giving fourth year students one of his exceedingly boring lectures on the history and philosophy of Geography, he pointedly remarks that no geographer he knew had successfully switched from the human to the physical side of the discipline, or vice-versa.

He is certainly a convincing demonstration of his own adage, whichever way he moves. Within three years Jamie will be his colleague, appointed as a Demonstrator in Geography at the University of Melbourne.

The initial idea for Jamie’s honours thesis is to map the distribution of Antarctic beech in Victoria. Bob thinks that Truda Howard is already doing it, although it later turns out she is not, so Jamie suggests that he could look at the distribution of blue gums in the Otway Ranges, an area he knows well after working as an observer in the fire tower near Anglesea for two summers.

The fire tower has three sound legs and one rotted one. It shakes alarmingly in strong winds. Jamie sits up there day after day reporting yet another puff of smoke from the Lorne tip. This job is a great earner, especially with quadruple time on Christmas Day, as well as having the bonus of avoiding the family Christmas
altercations. Because the tower is close to Anglesea, a beach holiday destination, Jamie has many visitors, including friends from university with whom he socialises at night, before returning, with or without company, to his small hut. The worst thing about the job is the toilet facilities, which require Jamie to bury the malodorous contents of a can far too frequently; once in two years.

Yet another happy family Christmas. From left: Drew, Betty, Sue, Jamie, Anne, Gwen, Don, Flora

The best thing about the job is learning from the members of the forestry work gang, with whom the fire spotter works when it is considered to be too wet for fires. They train Jamie to pull up bracken and use the white sap on its rhizomes to counteract the effect of bull ant bites. They train him, at the slightest hint of rain, to build a shelter out of branches within which to play cards, as the union forbids getting drenched while wielding a shovel. They comment on the best times to light wild fires to maximise overtime
payments. They are contemptuous of the Lorne woman who tries to stop them clearing scrub near the foreshore.

While avoiding alienating his new mates, Jamie silently agrees with the woman, having loved walking through the romantic tunnels beneath the scrub to get to the beach when in Lorne on holidays with Betty and Barry. He is also silently shocked that they lighted the very fires they are employed to put out.

The head forester in Anglesea is a gentle naturalist who is deeply attached to his part of the Otways. He is disappointed in Jamie when he refuses the invitation to fight the one arsonist’s fire that he saw from the tower. Jamie’s refusal is reasonable in that he had about the same knowledge of firefighting as of carpentry and gourmet cooking, and the flames, even at a distance, are rather large and hot. After all, he had reported the fire immediately it was lit, on the road to the north of Anglesea.

No-one arrives to fight the fire for two hours as it crackles towards houses nestled in the Anglesea scrub. When the fire passes by these houses it leaves them apparently unscathed. Then, ten to twenty minutes later, a large mass of black smoke marks yet another insurance claim.

The next fire tower up the ridge is personed by a Jewish Law student, Ben Lewin, later to become a film director. At a time of zero unemployment, Ben gets the job sight unseen. When the horrified foresters take him to Peters Hill, he is able to use his superhuman arms to drag his polio-withered legs to the top of the tower, so keeps the job.

Ben bravely makes friends with a hermit who lives in an old unpainted wooden shack in a small neglected paddock just below the tower. Lloyd soon becomes a cult figure. This is a man who lives off the coast during the great depression, leads a conventional Geelong workers life in the prosperity of the fifties and is struck
down by bowel cancer and divorce. He retreats to Peters Hill where he occasionally sees alien spaceships and works on a huge collection of Willys cars and Harley-Davidson motor bikes. He switches one number plate among the many vehicles, depending on which one happens to be working at the time.

Lloyd is Jamie’s pit team on his honours project, keeping his FC Holden going on the rough bush tracks he takes it up to do mapping. Jamie stays with Lloyd much of the time he is doing field work, having the desert ‘Spotted Dick’ (sultanas in glutinous white rice mixed with condensed milk) and hating the lack of any toilet. Lloyd has a colostomy bag which he tosses on to the fire when full.

One evening Lloyd and Jamie are sitting sociably on the verandah of the shack when they see a tiger snake slithering up the hill from the dam, where it had been devouring frogs.

Lloyd comments on how the snake lives below the verandah and never causes any trouble. It immediately heads towards the stairs. There is a fast retreat into the house. It might have had young, as
tiger snakes are protective of their progeny, which emerge wriggling.

Jamie’s honours degree eventually returns him second uppers, well below his ambitions. Bob Parsons thinks that the thesis is better than that, but is rolled in the staff meeting. Jamie resigns himself to starting the Diploma of Education required by his studentship. But, before then, he is to go on a research trip to Kangaroo Island with Bob and an algologist with whom Bob had done his PhD in the Botany School, Peter Saenger.

The trio head off in the Geography Department station wagon with next to no camping gear, but planning to camp out, which they do, sleeping on the ground and cooking over open fires. Jamie undertakes a small research project on coastal vegetation, while Bob collects hybrid mallees and Peter collects algae.

For some reason Jamie could not fathom, Peter and Bob become hostile with each other, then silent. It may have been the effect of the wild elephant garlic which is harvested and overused on steak meals, or just close proximity for too long a time.

Kangaroo Island has no rabbits, so the bare patches at the top of calcarenite cliffs found in Victoria are not there. However, koalas had been introduced and are destroying the small stands of their food trees in the Flinders Chase National Park. The rangers have bulldozed huge fire breaks around and across the park. Jamie feels distressed. He still does.
Conservation Worrier

_ Jamie and mallee, Kangaroo Island 1968_
CHAPTER TWO
THE CHILD IN NATURE

The toddler explorer

When Jamie is three going on four, he and a little friend purposefully leave Betty and sporty Barry’s Elwood flat to mount an expedition to Elwood Beach, while his mother languishes ill in bed, and his father is at work. With the Norfolk Island pines on the other side of busy Beach Road in their sights, the pair miraculously manage to get there and back. Jamie is elated with their achievement, and devastated by the highly negative reaction when they triumphantly return. However, Betty's tomboy childhood on the banks of the Brisbane River make her relaxed about her progeny frequenting naturally dangerous places, so once she manages to induce road sense in Jamie, and Barry teaches him to swim, he is free to resume his exploratory career.

Planning the assault on Elwood Beach
Nature and the school child

In the early years of primary school there are three wild places in walking distance of Jamie’s white weatherboard New Ideal house in Tucker Road, Moorabbin. There is a small swamp at the top of Brosa Avenue where mosquitoes, tadpoles and feral boys with dangerous weapons embark on their life cycles. Jamie is almost killed there as a ball bearing, impelled from a home-made gun, whistles past one of his protruding ears.

A bit further away there is a sand quarry that has filled with water to form a deep lake, full of little fish and leeches. This is much more attractive to feral boys than the small swamp, so the tame boys only venture there in numbers, as is also the case for The Bamboos, a reed swamp criss-crossed with paths on the other side of dangerously busy South Road. By the end of Jamie’s incarceration in primary school these wild places are no more, filled in for progress. But, by then Jamie has a bicycle.

In his early pimply phase of life Jamie fills a bottle with dilute lemon juice, sweetened heavily with sugar, and, accompanied by none, one or two other neighbourhood baby boomers, bicycles as far as his lungs and legs allow. In the late fifties and early sixties it is hard to find anything wild within bicycling distance of Tucker Road, Moorabbin. Heading northwards the wildest thing the explorers find is yabbies in an ornamental lake in an Elsternwick park. Heading south there is Cheltenham Park, where coastal ti-trees arch over grey sand soured with urine. Heading east there are golf courses, quarries and market gardens, but no accessible native bush. Heading west there are beaches, headlands and a narrow strip of ti-tree. Jamie and his friends ride their bikes along the narrow grey dirt tracks and, if the weather suits, swim. Port Phillip Bay is as close to wild nature as they get when not on holidays.
In later decades it turns out that the little octopi that among the rocks, that luckily Jamie does not disturb, are potential killers, their bite causing terminal paralysis. Jamie often disturbs sting rays, which satisfyingly flap off.

Once, while swimming he sees the fin of a tiger shark heading towards shore. The waters empty of people with fearful rapidity. However, the octopi are more dangerous than the sharks. The only shark mortality recorded for Port Phillip Bay is that of a bomb diver who had launched himself from the heights of a pier.

*Frank Burgess, Barry, Drew, Jamie and Betty on beach*

The best bomb dives made the biggest splashes and were produced by turning oneself into a human ball. The shark is obviously in a state of shock and disorientation, as you would be if hit by a human bomb from great height, and literally snaps.

By 2000 mortalities from crashes of shark spotting planes in Port Phillip Bay are twice as great as that from sharks. After having had one bad experience, the sharks are rumoured to have refused to eat the corpses of the unfortunate pilot and the accompanying journalist.
Wild places apart, it is dangerous to be a boy or youth on the streets in Moorabbin, especially at night. Bodgies, with their Elvis hairdos, cruise by in hotted up Holdens looking for a Jazzer skull to crush. Jazzers are the predecessors of Goths and Emos. Jazzers wear black if at all possible, have duffel coats, pointy-toe shoes and hair as long in the front as is possible to get away with at school. Traditional jazz is played at their dances. Jamie’s favourite band is the Red Onions, all teenagers with long hair. The dancing style is akin to shaking hands, although much closer contact in the dark halls and the adjacent parks and cemeteries is the driving ambition of most of the boy Jazzers.

**Holidays in Nature**

The difficulties of surviving in Moorabbin make holiday interactions with the Australian bush and shore seem idyllic. It is so much nicer to say hello to a snake than a bodgy, with or without his homemade gun. The snake raises its head, looks vaguely quizzical, then slithers off, unlike the bodgy, who is too dumb to be questioning.

So there are mosquitoes, leeches and ticks in the bush, but the worst mosquitoes in the world frequent the gardens and houses of the southern suburbs of Melbourne. So there are bush fires, but Barry just drives through them as they creep through the roadside undergrowth in East Gippsland. So there are dumping waves and rips and blue bottle jellyfish; all easy to avoid. So trees fall down and crush people; these are only the Port Phillip tiger sharks of the bush.

The places the Kirkpatricks visit outside Melbourne are so clean; the air, the sand, the foliage and the water. As if wanting to dirty them up a bit, fish are caught. Barry has a small wooden dinghy and a two horsepower outboard engine. When high pressure
systems and weekends or holidays coincide the family rises very early in search of prey.

The seas are oily calm in the weak morning sun, growing darker as the dinghy put-puts further from shore, usually in a light sea mist. When the location is judged to be propitious, the engine is turned off and the occupants drift suspended between two states of silence, trailing fishing lines. Their victim is the flathead. It is very definitely killed for food not sport. To catch a flathead, a bit of flesh, often from another fish, is impaled, concealing a barbed hook. A lead sinker is attached to the line to transport the bait to depth. When the line feels heavy either the hook has been snagged, or a fish has been caught. The fish can be killed by inserting a sharp knife into its skull, with the alternative being protracted writhing as it suffocates to death. Jamie strongly dislikes both options. Being an asthmatic, he chooses the former.

On reaching shore, the fish are beheaded, gutted and cleaned in salt water, leaving an ugly bloody mess if the sea gulls are off on another mission. The fish is fried by Betty the same day, the ugly,
spiky, slimy flathead miraculously transformed into firm, sweet white flesh and the occasional vengeful curved sharp bone.

Catching fish off the rocks is different. To start with, nothing could make the grey flesh of a rock cod taste good, although the occasionally caught leather jackets are among the finest tasting of fish. The rock platforms that Barry and his friends fish from on the ocean shores of the Mornington Peninsula are the most striking of the many such places Jamie visits as a child. Jamie can still feel, hear and smell himself there.

The platforms are formed from highly erodible aeolian calcarenite, which is wind-blown sand cemented by lime. The edges of the platforms drop vertically into, or overhang, deep green sea full of highly visible vegetable and animal life. Natural swimming pools are found within the platform.

*The source of vengeful bones*
There, at low tide, Jamie can swim timelessly amongst the fish entrapped as the tide retreats. He loves the feeling of weightless total immersion, the translucent green of the water and the rippling silver of the water surface from below. As always near water, the hour of terrestrial existence imposed on Jamie after eating lunch seems an endless torture.

Occasional small calcarenite castles protrude from the surface of the platforms, pools in reverse. These are handy retreats when an occasional set of giant waves swash across the platform as the tide returns.

The castles shake slightly as the giant waves push into cavities in the calcarenite. Salt crystals tighten bare brown torsos as the fishers retreat to the tall sand dunes from whence they came.

Lake Catani

Barry hates camping, but does quite like walking in the bush if it is not hot enough to be in the water, or if he needs to walk through the bush to get to the water. At Mount Buffalo the family walk back
and forth along a bush track from the Chalet to Lake Catani, where they swim in the inch or so of warm brown water that overlays its cold depths. On colder days the family walks in The Labyrinth among giant granite tors.

On Sunday trips to Macedon the family has a roast lunch cooked by Jamie’s grandmother then Barry drives them to the mountain, where they occasionally walk up a gully filled with giant manna gums, garnished with koalas. At the end of the track there is a tiny overgrown dam, diverting some of the flow of the stream to sumptuous European gardens.

Closer to home there is a favourite picnic spot in the south of the Dandenong Ranges, called by Barry, The Rock. A clear stream flows through child-tall concrete culverts as whip birds crack in the forest and lunch is consumed. The Rock is now immersed beneath an impoundment. A formal camp ground has been built next to Lake Catani, destroying its romance. The track into the tall manna gums now passes a giant cyclone wire fence, enclosing a raw dam.

Barry and Betty like to holiday in places where people nestle into nature near to water. The places they love are so harmonious that they become targets for developers, forcing Jamie’s parents to ever more remote locales, with the developers in hot pursuit. Consequently, Jamie experiences more of the destruction of beauty and nature than would have been the norm for his age group.

His parents appear to Jamie to have unresolved inner conflicts about development. On one hand they are upset about the destruction of beauty and nature all around them. On the other hand they have a high regard for new monuments to human endeavour, particularly those involving water or sport.

On the many family drives, if there is a dam to visit, visited it is, and the moment commemorated in celluloid. In later life Jamie was even taken to worship the dam that drowned The Rock. One of the
very few books allowed to stay in Betty and Barry’s house is 'Australia - Liquid Gold' a celebration of the massive post-war development of Australia.

Jamie gains the impression that, with the possible exceptions of the Great Barrier Reef, the koala and the platypus, Australia is boringly bereft of the natural wonders of the world, a fitting locale for ugly suburbs, uglier holiday towns, giant holes in the ground and dams without end.

Worshipping dams without end (1962)
Celebrating Jamie’s sixtieth birthday in a surprise symposium given by past research students, current research students and colleagues (front row from left Jim Russell, Kath Dickinson, Fiona Coates, Sarah Taylor, Jamie, Cynthia Roberts, Jenny Scott, Rod Fensham; Middle row from left Matt Appleby, Mick Brown, Kate Brown, Nikki Meeson, Janet Smith, Tad Zagorski, Jennie Whinam, Ian (HumZoo) Thomas; back row from left Jon Marsden-Smedley, Steve Leonard, Amy Koch, Kevin Leeson, Jane Keble-Williams, Dave Green).
CHAPTER THREE
PEDAGOGIC PURSUITS

Becoming a demonstrator

Jamie lasts one lecture in the Diploma of Education. He approaches Professor Andrews on the possibility of getting a scholarship to do a Masters degree, extending his Otways work on the blue gums under Bob Parsons. It happens, so he now has a huge debt to repay and the prospect of continuing the research life he loves for a little while more. With half a year of travelling, collecting and measuring he has the raw material for his thesis. Soon after, Bob leaves for a position in Botany at Latrobe University, so Jamie begins to teach biogeography within the Melbourne Geography Department and demonstrate on excursions for Latrobe University.

Nonie is born to Sue and Jamie in late 1970, so Jamie asks Professor Andrews for a demonstrating position to keep him going without a second income, and also requests a conversion from Masters to PhD. Miraculously, he gains both.

His position as Demonstrator in Geography at the University of Melbourne places him lowest of the low in the academic hierarchy. The term demonstrator is developing another meaning at the time, a meaning that causes it to disappear from the language describing the academic hierarchy. When 100,000 people demonstrate in the streets of Melbourne against the Vietnam War, or when Jamie and a few of his anarchist acquaintances, in a Rubinesque manner, throw monopoly money on the Stock Exchange floor, the word ‘demonstrator’ loses its technical exclusivity. Real demonstrators show students how to do practical things in their discipline. Luckily for Jamie, this is more to do with maps than carpentry.
Jamie, as only staff member participating, gets one kick, by mistake, in the Monash versus Melbourne Geography student football match 1971

Being an academic demonstrator is easier than the alternative mode. No-one runs after you, wanting to beat you up. Someone else more senior devises the tasks, and you provide the students with requested and gratuitous advice while they do them, then judge the quality of the outcomes from their efforts. It is exciting to be the marker, rather than the marked, for a while.

Somehow Jamie develops delusions, based in his own behaviour in relation to the subjects he finds interesting, that students want to learn what he was ‘teaching’, and appreciate good advice on what would now be called ‘continuous quality improvement’ of their marked practical reports. Many years later, Jamie begins to suspect that most students look at their marks, then throw down their reports in despair, indifference or glee. ‘Why read the comments
when you are never going to do this meaningless task again?’ they might think to themselves, although, on reflection, by this stage of their education the throw down response is probably automatic, barely involving the conscious mind.

Jamie’s delusions help the students who are keen to learn, and do not harm any others. However, once he realizes that marking is a highly subjective drudge job, roughly equivalent to putting a grade stamp on thousands of eggs while wearing a blindfold, and that the idea of writing comments on reports and essays is not to help the learning process, but rather to demonstrate that you have read them, he develops a deep and abiding hatred of the process. Unfortunately, by then he has moved from one of the two top tertiary institutions in the country to one somewhere in the middle.

The simplest way of measuring the prestige of a tertiary institution is to quantify the time that an average member of its staff has to spend marking; the less the marking, the higher the prestige. The quality of the students in the more prestigious universities makes marking extraneous to need.

A large marking load might also be a mechanism to defend against assertions of research inactivity: ‘Research – how can I do research with one thousand practical reports to mark each week?’ The power theory is also convincing: ‘I may not be able to get a job in a top institution and my Professor kicks me around, but at least I can make the students suffer!’

Learning to be a lecturer

Apart from marking, being a Lecturer in Geography at the University of Tasmania involves two other pedagogic tortures. The lecture from zero knowledge is the first of these. The tutorial is the second.
Professor Peter Scott defines Jamie’s duties in the first year of his employment. Because Jamie has to finish writing his PhD thesis, Peter explains, he has been given a light teaching load. Jamie smiles gratefully. In the first term, says Peter Scott, this load largely consists of the first year lectures in physical geography, on the subject of climate.

Jamie’s smile becomes contrived. His only exposure to climate at the University of Melbourne consisted of the first year lectures of the non-football-coach. He has a lot to learn.

Jamie’s first lecture is on the global circulation system. In explaining the Coriolis deflection of winds across pressure gradients he naively follows the record analogy given in the textbook. This involves an observer drawing a straight line as the record turns around. This ruins the record with an arc that becomes more extreme towards its outer edge, the equivalent of the equator. A sharp student in the first row points out that Jamie had just said that the deflection was absent at the equator. A bad start.

It takes Jamie a week he does not have spare to work out why the analogy does not work. The next week he jumps up on top of the
lecture bench, two pieces of chalk in hand. First, he pretends to be on the equator, falling forward with the thrown chalk as the earth rotates. Then, he pretends to be on a pole, rapidly turning around, as the chalk he throws lands well away from the direction of his gaze. The students like this explanation, forgiving him his earlier ignorance. Students are very forgiving and teaching is most certainly the best way to learn.

Jamie turns up to tutorials as a student because the academics sometimes notice absences from small groups. He says a few words when it is more embarrassing not to say them than to say them. Intellectually and socially, he gets absolutely nothing out of most tutorials; exactly the amount he puts in. He is now expected to take several of these classes each week.

As far as he can make out from his reading, the process is: there is a topic; some readings for students to undertake on the topic; and, these readings are to provide a basis for rigorous intellectual discussion, or, at least, clarification, of the subject matter. This is a form of teaching that could not have been less suited to the Australian student ethos. It is only students who are slightly deranged by excessive interest in the subject, sucks or extreme social outliers who readily engage in verbal discourse.

The normal students feel that discoursing has two major risks: if they know a lot about the topic, they are regarded by other normal students to be a big-noter, to have tickets on themselves; and, if they know very little, they are exposed to ridicule by the tutor and any big-noters who happened to be in the class.

One out of three tutorial classes is completely populated by normal students. To prevent the retrospectively desirable outcome of complete silence for fifty minutes, Jamie commences with a leading question. After this question there is a sufficient period of silence to allow someone to break out with a staccato answer
without losing social faith. This period of silence is about 30 to 60 seconds, but seems like a lifetime to the sweating tutor. ‘What do others think of that response?’ Jamie enthusiastically parries. Silence, followed by a reluctant ‘seems alright to me’ from the normal student with the second most degree of sympathy with the plight of her tutor. ‘There are alternative points of view, what are they?’ Jamie responds, mindful of their tedious elaboration in the reading that it now seems only he has done. This question is followed by unbroken silence for more than a minute. By this stage Jamie is usually sufficiently broken to launch into a lecture on the subject matter of the tutorial. The students gratefully start to take notes, little realizing the depth of Jamie’s ignorance on the subject of spheroidal weathering.

The second type of tutorial has one abnormal student, who is more than keen to give a lecture to the captive group, including the tutor; the lecture usually being prejudice reinforced by ignorance. The normal students feel relief mixed with boredom. Jamie desperately tries to introduce other points of view, without hurting the feelings of the abnormal student, and also attempts to get the normal students to say something. This is mission impossible, as the garrulousness, seriousness and unselfconsciousness of the abnormal student more deeply entrenches the social norms.

While Jamie dreads attending the above types of tutorials as much as setting off on his bicycle for a day at Haileybury, he discovers ways of making tutorials with two or more abnormal students enjoyable and stimulating occasions. The most effective ploy is earnest ignorance, whether real or false, although real works better. Jamie convincingly confesses that he does not understand why weathering should be spheroidal rather than rectangular. The abnormal students engage in discourse on their alternative erroneous points of view on why this is the case. Knowledgeable normal students join in the argument, fooled into thinking that they
are in the pub on Friday evening, not in a tutorial. The ignorance of the tutor, combined with the example given by the abnormals, makes normal students relax to the extent that they can enjoy an argument over the shape of rocks. The second successful ploy is digression. The subject of digression needs to be one that the normal students feel is firmly in their area of competence, for example, in the 1970s, should spheroidally weathered rocks be used as missiles during protests? This loosens everyone up to the degree to which they can often be diverted back to a vigorous discussion of the tutorial topic, without realizing what has happened. These ploys are not necessary more than once or twice, as vigorous friendly discussion is its own reward. Once a tutorial group works in this way it is the highlight of the week for every participant. Unfortunately, neither ploy works with tutorial types one or two. These require different approaches: marks for participation; humiliation for non-readers and non-answerers; organised small group discussion and reporting; marked student presentations. None of these options appeal to Jamie, as he has the questionable attitudes that students should be responsible for their own learning, and that he is but a resource to be used in achieving their learning goals. He also desperately wants to be liked and not to be authoritarian.

Eventually it dawns on Jamie that a large proportion of the students he supposedly teaches are passive resistant to learning anything he, or anyone else, wants to teach them. These students have lost their enthusiasm for school learning sometime in early secondary school, and are only engaging in tertiary education because they cannot imagine other ways of living, like the social life, or because they are convinced that the further they get in the schooling obstacle course the better off they will be in later life. It is a point of pride to get through with minimum work and without learning anything.
Some of the most intelligent students Jamie encounters achieve 50% in every subject. He begins to feel that the only way most students retain anything on the syllabus at university is by mistake. Such mistakes seem mainly to happen when students are enjoying themselves, a relatively rare occurrence in the formal part of the education process.

Jamie stops agonising over the process of knowledge transfer, rather trying to make the students feel secure and entertained. He ceases to give lectures on the intricacies of classification and ordination, subjects that fascinate him, and essential tools for those going on to do research in his area, because there are too few opportunities for jokes.

Jamie’s long undergraduate teaching career is a lesson in gradualism. Gradually he converts almost all of his teaching into the modes he likes, lecturing and field work, in the process devising units and a degree, the Bachelor of Natural Environment and Wilderness Studies, that reflect his passion for nature and its conservation, and reducing marking. Luckily, there are still many students with the same passion, so Jamie still has a job as well as a vocation.

*Enjoying passion*

In the early nineteen-seventies, University of Tasmania students burn some old cars in Regent Street, to make the point that they want a bridge or underpass to their union building.

They get an underpass. Jamie is impressed by the physicality of the protest, being used to a more cerebral approach to dissent.

The withdrawal of the Whitlam government from the Vietnam War when elected in 1972 causes a marked decline in student activism. There is nothing like the prospect of being compulsorily made an
object of lethal intent to cause the young thinking person to concentrate on socio-economic structures and their deficiencies.

In the late seventies, a passion for retaining wild nature replaces resistance to imperialism as the main motivation for student, and staff, activism. Most of the staff of the university in the late seventies are not much older than the students they teach, and are definitely more radical.

The worldwide Green political movement has its roots in Tasmania, with Dick Jones, a botanist, being constantly in the media and standing for parliament as a representative of the first green party in the world, the United Tasmania Group. Dick, Sam Lake, Ralph Chapman and Tony Finney, among others set up the Centre for Environmental Studies, as an interdisciplinary endeavour focused on retraining people already in jobs to think environmentally.

There is a Master of Environmental Studies as a vehicle for this retraining. Students are expected to do joint theses which take advantage of their different skills. Ungraded passes are the order of the day. Jamie volunteers to give a few sessions in some of the subjects, and helps supervise the occasional thesis, but does not get how the approach differs in any way from that in his home academic base in Geography, except that it is clear that the focus of the research done by students, and the staff in the Centre, is green radical, and that the students do not have to do much for their passes compared to undergraduates in Geography.

In the 1970s, the Department of Geography at the University of Tasmania is dominated by expatriates, mainly from England. The subject is fractured into subdisciplines and is certainly focused on other things than a new green society. Jamie wants a new green society and therefore considers joining the Centre, but decides that it is being reviewed so often that it will probably not provide a good
long term refuge. He also thinks that he likes being able to decide on his own research and teaching programs, rather than being swept up in a passionate group endeavour. No-one pressures him to do anything much in Geography.

The people who set up the Centre for Environmental Studies think it would be a good idea to have an interdisciplinary environmental undergraduate offering. They end up with three first year units labelled Environmental Science. Jamie ends up teaching one third of the one labelled C. One third is given by Bill Jackson, the Professor of Botany, and another third by Othmar Buchmann, a zoologist. At the time, none of the three have exemplary organisational powers. Nevertheless, C lasts longer than A and B, both of which die when academic departments withdraw resources to their core functions.

Environmental Science C dies about the time of the merger of the Department of Geography with the Centre for Environmental Studies in an academic unit, headed by Jamie, called Geography and Environmental Studies. When Environmental Science C dies, Jamie incorporates his lectures into the new first year Geography and Environmental Studies. He loves giving these lectures, which allow him to talk about the irrationality of current socio-economic systems and technological determinism, among many other subjects relevant to a new green world.

Many of the undergraduate geography students in the late seventies and early eighties are environmentally active, no more so than Kevin Kiernan, straight to a Science degree from the failed Pedder campaign. Kevin works best by himself, pretending to be an organisation. He prevents an army rifle range at Cockle Creek and stops a quarry in Freycinet National Park, helps found the Wilderness Society and becomes the first scientific conservationist devoted to geodiversity. When Kevin goes on the bush excursions run by Jamie, he disappears into the distance, only to fleetingly pass
the group, road-runner-like on the way down. Jamie’s one experience with Kevin in caves, of which Jamie thinks Kevin is a bit overfond, finishes with Jamie backing out to avoid having to manoeuvre through a hole smaller than his head.

A lot of Jamie’s students, including Jayne Balmer, are arrested in western Tasmania in the campaign to stop the dams.

In the nineties, a group of his undergraduate students, including Nicole Gill, work hard and successfully to repel genetically modified organisms from Tasmania. They educate Jamie on the issue.

The Vice-chancellor, Alan Gilbert, holds pretentious leaders forums designed to flatter the Tasmanian decision-makers. These are called Tasmania 2010. He decides to hold one on genetic engineering (GE). Jamie is asked to speak. He is the only speaker who is negative about GE, which is being heavily promoted in biology and agriculture at the university. He points out the stupidity of allowing GE in a Tasmania that is increasingly relying on a clean and green image to sell products. In this context, it does not matter if GE turns out to be harmful or not in the long run. Green consumers just do not trust companies who use GE technology to sell more herbicides, and never will. That was the last time Jamie was invited to one of these fora, much less to speak at one.

As Head of School Jamie manages to get the rest of the staff to agree to allow undergraduate students to mingle with them in the tea room, a large space with an adjacent patio downstairs. Undergraduates have never been allowed in similar spaces elsewhere in the university. Indeed, the staff eventually move their tea room elsewhere after the cessation of Jamie’s long reign.

The undergraduates that mingle are bright, bolshy and dedicated, although the occasional challenge turns up, like the student who carries a traditional land line phone with him and speaks
disparaging remarks about the people present into it. Jamie enjoys having his morning teas and lunch with the students, but all things are impermanent, especially undergraduates.

In the noughties there is a strong undergraduate environmental collective, among which Jamie’s students, especially Jen Calder, are prominent. Jamie speaks at one of their meetings on the ref steps, protesting at the increasing cost and decreasing quality of the university experience. The legacy of this particular group is the Source, a garden and wholefoods shop, that the group persuades the university to support with buildings and space. It is an oasis of the seventies among the increasingly managerial decor and ambience of the university as a whole.

Jamie remains loyal to the downstairs tearoom, but it does not work after the rest of the staff and the postgrads abandon it. He decides to eat at the Source instead, and discovers where the passionate environmentalists are now meeting. Vegan lunch at the Source is the highlight of his day. There is always someone to talk with about environmental issues, tactics and life in general, including students, such as Carly Rusden and Alex Tomlison, who are doing some of his units, while pushing the university to divest from fossil fuels. Jamie attends some of their demonstrations and is nervous for them when they occupy the administration building, something Jamie has not seen since his days at Melbourne University more than four decades ago, when it was so common that a tunnel was built to allow the administrators to escape. The Tasmanian administrators Jamie knows say how nice the students are and how they like the guitar music in the corridors.

Jamie knows that he will miss them all when they go off to make the future. They will not be dour, directive leaders. They are full of humour, life and affection for each other and the world, willing to accept those in their late sixties, like Gaby and Jamie, as much as the many children who frequent the Source.
It is good that students are still taking on the unreal world outside the university, as the ones Jamie taught in the seventies and eighties are retiring in droves from positions of influence, and Jamie has no intention of following them. He hopes that he just will not turn up at work one day because he is dead.

**Enjoying research supervision**

When Jamie moves to Hobart he immediately feels alone in his academic passions. His discourses in Melbourne with Bob Parsons, Neville Scarlett and Dave Ashton constitute platonic love affairs, with them and plant ecology.

He never has enough of their company, although they might have too much of his. No more ecology talk in the pub or in the kitchen at Carlton parties. No more tea room chat. No more soaking up knowledge in the bush. No passionate plant ecologists who want to talk with a young, long-haired geographer for more than a minute or two. No-one prepared to identify the plants he does not know.

Jamie works hard to get to know the Tasmanian flora by doing a lot of survey work in the bush and enjoying many hours sorting through specimens in the unstaffed herbarium on the top floor of the Botany Department.

It takes him two years to work out that one common hairy little herb is the seedling stage of the native bluebell. This learning process is aided by having to help his first few honours students identify specimens from their quadrats. The first two, Anne Hogg and John Glasby, competently finish their honours year and leave. The third, Satwant Calais, a Malaysian Sikh, completes honours, then enrols in a research Masters degree under Jamie’s supervision.

Satwant is in no hurry to complete his studies, as his major goal is to obtain Australian residency, a more difficult task for an Asian then than now. He achieves his goal by working hard in the broader
community, not by completing his studies on time, although complete he eventually does.

Satwant starts to fill the void as a friend and colleague, as does Stephen Harris, Jamie’s fourth honours student, who immediately after honours works with him on a survey of the coastal heathlands of Tasmania.

![Freycinet – prospective for heathland](image)

Chris Harwood, a recent ecology PhD graduate from ANU, also becomes a close colleague and friend of Jamie in the late nineteen-seventies, working with him and Stephen Harris on a survey of Tasmanian wetlands. Jamie’s years of academic isolation end.

Jamie’s first PhD student, Dave Bowman, had been one of the few passionately interested members of his third year class in plant geography. Jamie is able to help Dave in the process of producing an honours thesis in the Botany Department, which probably contributes to the decision Dave makes to do a PhD with Manuel Nunez, the Geography Department climatologist, and Jamie on regeneration in gum-topped stringybark forests. Then again, the scholarship or project might have been better than the Botany alternative.

Dave is delightfully eccentric for one of his tender age. He takes pleasure in calling the Geography Department, then in apparently terminal decline, the 'Department of Dust'. He works two triangular 'NO DAMS’ stickers into 'DOOM' to display on his door, as he follows the tick of the clock towards thermonuclear annihilation.
Satwant and Jamie in logged rainforest

During the dinner at an ecology conference in Canberra, he fronts the table of senior ecologists saying that he has heard that they were the ones he needs to supplicate for a job. Dave informs Jamie that, although life is essentially meaningless, one has to convince oneself that one's activities matter, or go mad. Jamie does not know how much he helps Dave with his existential problems, but he talks with him a lot. Dave is a night person, so when in at work during the day takes up any opportunity to socialise. Jamie is a morning person who has to do undergraduate teaching and marking, so socialising can become wearying.

Jamie feels a bit of a cheat, in that Dave is much more competent than him in a lot of the aspects of his project, but Jamie does have a few ideas that Dave takes up with characteristic zeal, and is of substantial use in Dave’s writing up stage.

Because Jamie enjoys the processes of writing and publishing, by the early nineteen eighties he is a visible potential supervisor for others than his own undergraduate students. Tasmania is a more attractive place to do ecological research than in the nineteen-seventies, as the public profile of its vegetation had been raised
nationally and internationally by disputes over the future of its wilderness areas.

Jamie later finds out that one of the main reasons he supervises so many honours students and postgraduates from interstate and overseas is that, unlike most of his colleagues, he answers enquiries.

Jamie is never been particularly cautious about the subject of the research of his students, having got used to the idea that he can always learn, usually with the help of the student, believing that, if it interests them, it must be interesting, and that, if they want him to supervise them, they are probably the best judge.

His worst supervision experiences are with those students who just want to be told what to do, and are doing their research projects for the qualification alone. His best are almost all of them, whether working on a project Jamie suggests or a project of their own devising.

Peter Scott has the same contempt for training academics as he does for women in academia, believing that any male smart enough to get an academic job should be able to figure it out. A later head of Geography thinks that academics should have no more than one or two postgraduates.

Luckily, this head leaves for a professorship elsewhere before Jamie’s number of research postgraduate and honours students balloons well beyond that limit.

In later years, Jamie manages to have more honours and postgraduate students than the university thinks he should have by getting elected to the Research Higher Degrees Committee, where he can deflect any threats.

The training of supervisors and students within a quagmire of policies and regulations is a very recent phenomenon. Jamie suspects that this quagmire might help those supervisors who
probably should not be in an academic position, and those students who should probably be doing something else, but just wastes the time of the majority of supervisors and students.

In the one to one relationship of supervisor and student, generalisations are hard to come by, with each student being very different in their needs for help and direction, and in the ways in which they like to interact, and each supervisor very different in their personality and predilections.

*Kath Dickinson, an incipient Professor of Botany, fresh from England 1980*

Empathy and flexibility are of more use than regulation, and there is no one right way of doing things to policy people with. The few useful generalisations Jamie can make after 40 years of supervising experience are not regarded by modern day academic bureaucrats as fit content for the education of supervisors and students. The most important of these is never to send a thesis for examination by anyone still establishing their career. Young academics behave similarly to sea elephants when presented with the opportunity to
crush a younger potential rival, presumably under the influence of the same hormones.

Three of Jamie’s postgraduate students of the early eighties are English, making their way to him independently. The first of them, Kath Dickinson, writes to the Head of the Geography Department asking if there are any prospects for voluntary or paid work in biogeography as she travels the world after finishing her honours degree in Sheffield.

Louise Gilfedder, Jocelyne Hughes, Jamie and Jennie Whinam 1987. Note suit with Blundstone boots in the first year of Jamie’s long and painful headship of Geography and Environmental Studies
The head erroneously thinks that she is the progeny of a famous English geographer so passes her letter on to Jamie rather than depositing it in his usual destination for such requests, the round-topped filing cabinet. Jamie needs someone to help him with a couple of research projects, so encourages her to come to Hobart. An opportunity to gain a scholarship from the Forest Ecology Research Fund leads, after some considerable agonising on her part, to her becoming Jamie’s second PhD student. The other two arrive via a mysterious scholarship given to people in England. Fran Marks is from the same year as Kath in Sheffield University. She is never really happy in Tasmania, but competently finishes a Masters degree and returns to England.

Jocelyne Hughes is an adventurous young graduate from Oxford University who also knows Kath from England. She manages to join an expedition to Heard Island when in Tasmania as well as spending a lot of time efficiently observing aquatic plants in rivers.

Satwant, Dave and Kath are friends of Christina and Jamie. As Jamie’s number of postgraduate students edges above ten, never to come down again, and his social leisure time decreases to zero because of overwork and domestic commitments, his interactions with postgrads gradually becomes confined to work hours.

To fill the social void he institutes Friday afternoon group discussions, complete with sherry from a crystal decanter, donated by Kerry Bridle. These discussions are great until his postgrads become so diverse in their interests that they have little to say to each other. In the noughties most of his postgrads work on their theses overseas, interstate and/or underwater. When, despite supervising 16 PhD students, he has only Steve Leonard and Cynthia Roberts who can turn up on Friday afternoon to talk plant ecology, Steve and Cynthia decided to do something else, an ecological lunchtime research seminar and departmental Friday night drinks, both of which eventually die. The crystal decanter
now sits on Jamie’s shelves as a symbol of the past coherence of his research group.

_Friday evening in the early 1990s. Kerry Bridle with chip butty. Emma Pharo back left._

Jamie uses Skype an awful lot, communicating with students all over the world. He still gets out into the bush with those of his research students who work on land in Tasmania, helping collect data on a fascinating variety of topics while conducting ecological conversations – as close to paradise as he can get.

He has a day brushing dirt off the roots of an upturned myrtle beech to help Chris Dean work out how much carbon is underground in old growth forests. Another day, he might be out helping identify germinates on bettong diggings for Gareth Davies. On in between days he crawls along transect lines in the north western grasslands identifying plants for Jo Potter, followed closely by a synchronicity of waving leeches.
Jamie’s educational learnings

It is fun learning stuff as long as you are not tested on it.

It is fun teaching stuff as long as you do not have to mark anything or get assessed on it.

Do not trust anything that you have learned about learning, or anything else; if the facts do not change your values will.

Convivial institutions do the most good. Authoritarian institutions propagate evil.

Accept students as they are.

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Extend ‘others’ to animals and plants, while avoiding starving to death.
Crawl quickly if you want to avoid leech bite.
Laugh a lot.
Well, Jamie has only been teaching for 45 years; he looks forward to some better, and more original, insights in the future.

*Janet Smith, Jo Potter and Peter McQuillan in leech-ridden grasslands*
CHAPTER FOUR
BECOMING ACTIVE

*An epiphany ignored*

At some time during his secondary schooling it dawns on Jamie that the giant city in which he lives only functions by using enormous amounts of fossil fuels for electricity, gas and petrol. The fossil fuels are combined with enormous amounts of non-replaceable metals to produce things. Jamie idly wonders how long it can last, but thinks that it does not matter much, as he also notices that his species seems highly likely to destroy itself in an atomic conflagration.

The outpouring of grief when the United States president, John Kennedy, is assassinated takes place without Jamie’s participation. He thinks that the death of anyone who is prepared to risk nuclear war for the sake of an ideological power struggle is not worth any distress on his part.

By reading the *Readers Digest* collection hidden in a cupboard in his living room, Jamie follows the transformation of the noble Russians with their strong leader Josef Stalin to the evil Soviets with their mad leader Stalin as World War II wanes and the Cold War waxes, and notes that the Americans are the only ones, so far, to drop atomic bombs on cities. Jamie finds it difficult to be optimistic about world leaders. They all seem to him to be barking mad, to have kangaroos in the top paddock, like most of the teachers in his school.

Jamie’s realisation of the ephemeral nature of the resources that support the society in which he lives does not moderate the fossil
fuel binge that ensues once he gets his own car, at the age of eighteen. He particularly likes exploring the roads in the forests to the north and east of Melbourne, where there are occasional deep gullies full of the romantic Antarctic beech and some of the tallest trees in the world. These are mountain ash, reputed to have grown taller than 100 m before being felled for farms and forestry. Although he drives along logging roads, and sees occasional felled forests and newly bulldozed tracks, he has the mindset of an explorer, not a forest conservationist. With the optimism of those without experience, he assumes that any destruction he sees is something that would not be repeated in today's more enlightened world.
Then again, the insane rulers of his country had recently instituted conscription of 18 year olds by lot, conscription to fight an illegal and immoral war in Vietnam, conclusively demonstrating a distinct lack of enlightenment. Perhaps he just lives in the present. Perhaps not; he finds it almost impossible not to think of the past and/or the future. He is a wheezing guilt and worry machine. Perhaps, he just does not think about it. At eighteen, a boy's mind is concentrated on very few things, one of which required co-operation with the person usually in his passenger seat, as well as somewhere away from other people.

A poor attempt at university radicalism

Jamie hates being a member of organisations – he perceives their rules and obligations to suck a large part of the enjoyment from life, usually for less than a mess of potage. He only attends the first meeting of the portentiously named Anti-Pollution Society because John Duigan, a member of the loose group he socialises with at university urges him to do so. This one useless meeting apart, his activism while a university undergraduate almost solely consists of attending various demonstrations against the Vietnam War and capitalist society in general.

In 2007, the Australian newspaper publishes a picture of ten or so demonstrators from the ASIO files, among whom Jamie, and probably thousands of others, erroneously thinks that he sees himself. Jamie’s first demonstration is when LBJ visits Melbourne. Embarrassed to be showing any emotions, students line the road next to the university. It is like waiting for the Queen without the periscopes and little flags. However, rather than waving, crudely written placards are shaken and antiwar slogans chanted. 'Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?' Someone throws red paint on LBJ's car. Melbourne, as represented by its mass media, is
outraged by this impolite violence to duco, but strangely unstirred by the mass deaths and defoliations in Indochina.

On the street, as LBJ passes, longhairs are almost outnumbered by shorthairs in long brown gabardine coats taking pictures. At that time it is said that you could not get a job in government without passing an ASIO check. One of Jamie’s closer school friends, Lou Costello, who studies at Monash University, rather than Melbourne, distinguishes himself by being the principal in a mock crucifixion at Easter. The Melbourne newspapers repeat the effort, with him. ASIO probably did not take his picture, at least not then.

ASIO was a communist-obsessive organisation, but communists are equally on the nose as capitalists among the radicals Jamie knows around the universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They are more sympathetic with Kropotkin, Proudhon, Wheelwright, Bookchin and Illich, than Marx, Luxembourg and Mao. They reject communist societies as boring, ugly and authoritarian and see them as equally environmentally destructive as the capitalist society in which they live. Anarchism, in the sense of no power without responsibility, rather than senseless bombing, is as close to a political creed as they get. This is a case of overwhelming optimism on their parts. A cursory examination of modern history reveals that anarchists are among the first people killed by the better-organised revolutionaries and reactionaries in times of turmoil.

Half Moon Bay
A lecturer, who is accused by the mock-crucifier of being an ASIO informer, tells Jamie in the pub that a political philosophy based on the assumption that people are co-operative and good ignores the exceptions, who either freeload or shoot everyone they don't like. Although Jamie rejects the argument at the time, he now sees how human evolution may have resulted in a subset of genetically-predisposed authoritarian berserkers, perhaps useful for protecting their progeny in times of great stress. Whether by nurture or nature, such people, currently labelled sociopaths, seem to exist, and to be over-represented in the upper echelons of most societies. Jamie has met a few.

**Polite activism in Sandringham**

As many of his anarchist friends drift off into semirural hippiedom or hard drugs, Jamie drifts into a career of environmental research and teaching, motivated by his love of nature. His hideous first child conscience makes him also engage in some degree of polite activism when he cannot possibly avoid it. Jamie has always been more of a worrier than a warrior. He decides early on that there is little hope for anything in the way of positive change in the sorts of political radicalism in which he had been involved, and that, if he is to do anything good in the world, it is to help keep as much of nature intact as possible until the obviously ephemeral growthist society collapses from resource exhaustion and pollution - shades of Marx, but environmental, not economic, determinism.

Jamie’s first scene of polite activism is the site of the gestation of his subsequent skin cancers - the Sandringham Coastal Reserve. The Council think that it is a good idea to knock over some more of the tatty, weedy, coastal tea-tree scrub to provide car-parking for visitors to the beaches. A group of residents of Black Rock, including the future general manager of the Australian Newsprint
Mills and Jamie, beg to disagree. Jamie’s first year Geography Science students survey the vegetation of the reserve.

![Image: Student, in weed-infested tea-tree]

Jamie later compares its condition in 1971 with accounts written by field naturalists decades previously. There is a television interview and also a talk with the city engineer, who is amazed that anyone would want to spend time protecting such degraded vegetation when better bush was being destroyed on all fronts outside Melbourne. Amazed or not, the car parks are stopped, weeds begin to be removed and native trees and shrubs are planted to replace the dying tea-trees. Jamie suspects that his academic papers have little to do with this change. It is to be different in Tasmania.
CHAPTER FIVE
TO TASMANIA

*Invading Tasmania*

To get a job in the University of Tasmania, Jamie makes one of his extremely infrequent visits to a hair and beard dresser and finds a suit, shoes and tie to wear. The only difficult person on the interview panel is Sam Carey, the Professor of Geology. Sam was a commando during World War II. He and his war mates celebrate Anzac Day with a spot of sky diving followed by a few less than quiet drinks in the Geology Department. Has he firmly fashioned his department into an exciting earthquake-proofed museum for this very purpose? His urges to kill the enemy behind the, in this case, white, lines return if anyone parks their car in his designated reserved spot, clearly visible from his overlarge office.

The exclusive toilet cubicle, shared with the Professor of Geography, Peter Scott, is not so visible from his office. Jamie likes to imagine the scene if Peter and Sam experience simultaneous urges to visit the small room. Would precedence be based on seniority in the armed forces or seniority in academia?

In 1971, when Sam Carey is cross-examining Jamie on his opinions on Lake Pedder, the development ethos that he supports is being strongly challenged, not least by some staff members of the University of Tasmania. People like Dick Jones in Botany and Sam Lake in Zoology are strong advocates for the protection of the lake from drowning by the Hydro-Electric Commission (HEC). Sam Carey may have thought that anyone with biological interests is a bit suspect on the development front, and here is Peter Scott
wanting a biogeographer. Jamie tactfully tells Professor Carey that he does not know enough about the issue to be able to advance any opinions. The other interviewees may have been less tactful, as Jamie is offered the job.

Jamie soon finds out a lot about Lake Pedder. It is impossible not to, as passions on the subject are extreme. In his first few weeks in Hobart, he meets Kevin Kiernan, the action in the Lake Pedder Action Committee, and Dick Jones, the serious, dark-rimmed-spectacled academic advocate for environmental probity.

While Jamie tries desperately to write a PhD thesis and many new lectures on subjects on which he is abjectly ignorant, his vivacious, curvaceous, fashion co-ordinator wife is welcomed to the delights of a Sandy Bay social group that includes hairdressers, doctors, lawyers and peripatetic actors. Jamie is more or less tolerated as Sue's half-acceptable handbag on the occasions on which he attends their louche garden and dinner parties.

Although conversations tend to dwell on more personally proximal interests than Lake Pedder, it is at one of these parties that Jamie receives a message passed on from the attorney-general, through one of his high-ranking employees, Roger Jennings, about a legal device that could be used to save Lake Pedder.

Jamie is asked to carry the message to Dick Jones, but has to live under the threat of being drummed out of Tasmania should he ever reveal his source (they are all dead now so Jamie is safe). Examples of such ostracism are frequent, reflecting a persistent vengeful streak in the overcurrent of the body politic.

The legal stratagem works, but is a useless expenditure of emotional effort, as the State government simply writes, and Parliament passes, a 'Removal of Doubts' act. The attorney general is an early political casualty of the still continuing Tasmanian Conservation-Development War.
The origin of the Tasmanian Conservation-Development War

The origin of the Tasmanian Conservation-Development War lies in the social and population history of Tasmania. Jamie finds out that the Tasmanian population in 1972 consists largely of descendants of the convicts and yeomen who engaged in an almost totally successful war of extermination against the indigenous children, women and men, the descendants of whom he is to meet. He observes that the yeomen and convict descendants are not overly fond of each other or of the few descendants of the indigenous blacks, but that all are friendly to most strangers.

Convict era ruins, Maria Island

Tasmania has been an economically depressed part of Australia since the Victorian gold rushes of the 1850s. Those who had in 1850 have kept, with those yeomen families who received stolen land in the 1820s and 1830s being still prominent in agriculture, business and politics when Jamie arrives in Tasmania. The yeomen also maintain their Britishness. Some of the Midlands graziers
Conservation Worrier

Jamie meets choose to fight in the British army during world wars and maintain strong family linkages with the mother country.

The descendants of convicts could have had a worse life, even though jobs have always been scarce. Even during the early 1970s Jamie would see shacks being built on vacant Crown land out of any material at hand. It is still possible to largely live off the wild. Wallaby, ducks, crays, abalone and scale fish can be obtained with little effort. Small rural blocks in high rainfall country cost next to nothing. The young emigrate, or stagnate in comfort, marrying their relatives. They do not give a toss about Britain, which never treated them well. The British even rejected Tasmanian apples in favour of joining the European Common Market.

The hydro-industrialisation of Tasmania, which peaked in the 1950s and 1960s, resulted in the immigration of northern European refugees and many Britons to respectively fill the labouring and professional jobs created by the building of dams, power stations and polluting factories parasitic on cheap power. Jamie notes that the high proportion of people with red hair and blue eyes in Tasmania did not shift. Although still economically and socially disadvantaged compared to most of the rest of Australia, Tasmania had a hydro-led prosperity with more jobs than usual. Consequently, hydro-industrialisation is the consensual political program in the 1970s, ably enacted by the long-serving Labor premier, Electric Eric Reece, under the guidance of the Hydro Electric Commission.

For developers, the trouble with prosperity is that it tends to increase the size of that part of the upper middle class whose employment does not directly depend on development. The trouble with Tasmania for developers is that even those whose work depends on development can become emotionally attached to the Tasmanian landscape in its undeveloped or underdeveloped modes.
This has proven to be especially the case with immigrants and Tasmanians who have returned from elsewhere.

Some of the immigrants of the 1970s were, like Jamie, recipients of new secure upper middle class jobs. Many more who Jamie met were attracted by the cheap productive land in the hills, places to subsist and weather impending global doom. Quite a few well off people were attracted to Tasmania to inhabit, and adorn with lavender and lace, the Georgian buildings that had survived because of constant economic depression.

Another large segment of the immigrants were bushwalkers and rafters, attracted by the Tasmanian wilderness, and then by their desire to fight for its future. They would kip in Jamie and Sue’s place in North Hobart on the way to their pilgrimages to remote mountains and rivers, doing mysterious things to even more mysterious equipment in order to prepare for their ordeals.

Tasmanians who Jamie met in his first years in Tasmania, like Pat Wessing and Jesse and Leo Luckman, had fought losing battles against the developers in the 1950s and 1960s. They gain a large Foreign Legion in the 1970s and early 1980s, a legion to be allied with the foreign power of the voters in the more prosperous suburbs of the largest cities of Australia.
Visiting Lake Pedder

Lake Pedder is a national issue. The national Whitlam Labor government offers Electric Eric full compensation if he does not drown Lake Pedder. At this stage, Whitlam has no constitutional power to stop him. Eric does drown the lake, probably bewildered that anyone in his Labor Party could see a black-watered shallow lake among the blighted buttongrass to be more important than Development.

In early 1972, Jamie visits the soon-to-be drowned Lake Pedder, leaving Scotts Peak dam early in the morning in the company of Bob and Gloria Cotgrove. They are long term Tasmanian residents, so might have some idea of the miserable walk that awaits them, but Jamie is not told. Squelching in black mud of indeterminately variable depth for hour after hour is a new experience. The only alternative seems to be leaping from the top of one buttongrass hummock to another, which proves drier, but so tiring that Jamie returns to squelching.

Luckily the party keeps on meeting people on their way back from the Lake Pedder beach. Even more luckily Jamie thinks, everyone they meet is an acquaintance or friend of Bob or Gloria, or both, necessitating long mutual updates of life histories, while Jamie rests his weary limbs sitting on yet another of the interminable hummocks.

The beach is very wide, the water very shallow and burgundy, and the beanies on the large number of people on the beach less than attractive to a recent Melburnite. Occasionally, a light plane clears people, like sheep, from enough of the beach to enable it to land. Jamie, Bob and Gloria turn back to the black mud.
Beginning to research Tasmania

During 1972, Jamie is not only writing lectures on subjects of which he knows next to nothing, but is also writing his PhD thesis on the distribution, genecology and taxonomy of the blue gums, a subject that he has more or less mastered, although it is not of much use for lecturing in geography.

Soon after unleashing two large brown volumes on the unsuspecting scientific world, Jamie is approached by a representative of one of the companies that cut down and plant trees in one of the parts of the State that the Hydro does not want. He suggests that Jamie might like to continue his genecological work to help them grow better trees. Jamie has carefully made his two large brown volumes bereft of anything useful for causing more plantations, as he believes them to be a scourge on the natural landscape, so is not about to accept an invitation to help create more productive ones.

Jamie has read everything that has been written about the natural vegetation of Tasmania. Macquarie Island, way down in the Southern Ocean, has the best known vegetation in the State, and not all that much is known about it. In most of the State the vegetation is almost totally unknown. Jamie wants to be a vegetation explorer and conservation advocate, not a tree breeder.

Luckily, two of his colleagues in the department, Eric Colhoun, an ebullient Orange Irishman, and Albert Goede, a phlegmatically friendly Dutchman, are to take the departmental Toyota Land Cruiser on a research expedition to the West Coast Range during the 1972/73 summer. They want to work out the glacial history of
Tasmania. Jamie tags along with them to embark on the first stage of his mission.

For many hours the green, hard-sprung Land Cruiser follows winding narrow bitumen. Just past a geologic site celebrating a large glacial erratic stone, the bitumen is left, and the living contents of the ‘cruiser’ desperately hang on as it bounces and lurches its way up an impossibly steep gradient through dark, dripping rainforest. When the gradient becomes gentler, the cruiser and its shaken contents emerge from the dark woods into yet another buttongrass plain.

Alarmingly, the buttongrass extends up the steep slopes of a gorge, into which the rough track disappears. The camber of the bouldery track on the slope of the gorge inclines to its depths. The view from the downslope side windows is intimate. After this near death experience, the rough track almost vertically ascends to a plateau that is to be the site of the research camp, next to a lake that had filled the glacier-scrapings of many millenia ago.

The camp consists of a large exhibition tent, within which it is possible to stand up, and tiny sleeping tents, within which it is only possible to lie down. The site is chosen because it is flat and lacks hummocks of buttongrass. A few years later Jamie would have known that the species which formed a comfortable mattress beneath the tents were markers of occasionally inundated ground. Waking up on a floating lilo initiates the process of reaching this conclusion.

Although in the process of embarking on a stratified random sampling survey of the vegetation of the West Coast Range, Jamie knows few of the plant species. He wanders over the rough landscape by himself, as do both Eric and Albert, startling the occasional tiger snake and Bennett's wallaby, and frequently falling over hidden obstacles and into concealed holes. There are other
nerve-wracking moments. One sunny day, doing a buttongrass quadrat in undulating country, Jamie hears an ominous sound among the rattle of the flower heads; a cross between a mumble and a song. Albert emerges, humming, on the course of his own solitary mission.

*Sensitive new age logging aftermath in the West Coast Range rainforest 1970s*
Once in the dense forest it is impossible to know exactly where you are, as admirable as random sampling is in theory. It still is impossible in the day of GPSs, instead of compasses and maps. Jamie assiduously collects and presses anything that looks different from anything else in each of the quadrats, in the hope of future identification.

When Jamie does not know a plant in Melbourne, he asks Bob Parsons or Neville Scarlett, who usually know, or, if they do not know, he consults books with pictures of plants until something similar comes up, then works laboriously through the keys for that genus or family. There are no Tasmanian colour photo books and no-one Jamie knows in Hobart that he feels he can ask, especially given the mountain of unknowns he has, but there is an unstaffed herbarium in the Botany Department that he has been shown by Bill Jackson, the Professor of Botany, when Jamie visited Hobart while collecting blue gums for his PhD work.

The only occasional inhabitant bar Jamie is Dr Winifred Curtis, the author of the Flora of Tasmania, which, at that time, covers only the dicotyledonous plants. She is short, acerbic and somewhat suspicious of this long-haired, pipe-smoking callow youth who appears to have little or no knowledge of the normal processes of plant identification.

Jamie’s approach to identification is indeed totally unprofessional. He looks in box after box after box of specimens hoping to find something that approximates the appearance of any of his specimens. By the time he looks through almost every box in the herbarium he has built a good inductive knowledge of the Tasmanian flora, and knows the names of almost all of the specimens he had collected and many more. Within five years of moving to Tasmania, Jamie is better able to identify fragmentary
Conservation Worrier

plant specimens than anyone else in the State. This is a good thing, as Bill Jackson locks up the herbarium until the State Government provides a curator for it, which it eventually does.

A large proportion of the plants Jamie collects in the West Coast Range are species that appear to be confined to western Tasmania. The species composition of the vegetation bears little or no resemblance to the vegetation described in the few existing papers and is dramatically different to that of the vegetation around Hobart. This is most spectacularly the case with the alpine vegetation, with which Jamie has already fallen desperately in love. This romance diverts him for over a decade from working on the vegetation types that most need conservation attention in Tasmania.

The alpine explorer

During the 1970s a companion on many of Jamie’s summer research trips to remote alpine areas is Adrian Bowden, a blond Adonis footballer in the process of becoming a groundwater hydrologist via a science degree in geomorphology and a PhD in hydrology. After an overnight walk in the West Coast Range to access Mount Murchison, Adrian and Jamie feel overconfident enough to plan a two week walk to traverse both the Arthurs, jagged ranges in the heart of the southwest wilderness.

At Mount Murchison, Adrian baulks at crossing a razor back ridge that leads to the summit. Jamie is only slightly more sanguine. This fear motivates Adrian and Jamie to get climbing lessons from Les Wood, the rural geographer in their department, who escaped Idi Amin in Uganda, so fears nothing. All three have highly competitive personalities, but there is no point in competing with Les in climbing. He has a global reputation for his almost impossible achievements. He demonstrates to Adrian and Jamie
how to get past an overhang when they can barely stop shivering with fear long enough to find the next handhold on a forty-five degree rock face. Although not especially scared of heights, Jamie decides that the only pleasure in rock climbing is the relief in reaching the top. Adrian admirably persists, climbing many a large cliff with Les.

Alpine explorer in Tyndall Range 1975

One of the walking targets for Jamie and Adrian on their planned two week trip is Federation Peak, a rock spire that tops the Eastern Arthurs. Adrian thinks that it would be a good idea to carry climbing gear. Equally misguided, Jamie thinks it would be a good idea to eat macrobiotically while on the walk, especially since the ingredients do not weigh much. Adrian, an enthusiastic carnivore, reluctantly agrees, as he and Jamie desperately try to make their packs light enough to carry.
Too much alcohol is consumed on the night before the early departure for the Arthurs from the start of the YoYo Track. Jamie’s H-frame pack is so heavy that he struggles to get it on his back. Hangovers do not help in the ups and downs of the YoYo, nor the ups and ups when turning left on to the track to Mt. Picton over Red Rag Scarp. The idea is that Jamie records the Mt Picton alpine vegetation before a descent to Craycroft Crossing. The route is along Blandfordia Ridge. Adrian and Jamie carefully peruse the aerial photographs in the map library at work before deciding on this route. On the photographs it looks lovely and clear, as a recent fire had reduced the stature of the vegetation. They do not notice the date.

Before embarking on the downward journey, Adrian and Jamie climb the peak of Mt Picton where they are shocked by the view of roads and clearfells in the forest below. Jamie thinks that their efforts should have got them well away from such reminders of the fate of nature in growth societies.

Three hours later Jamie starts to perceive the virtues of bulldozers and chainsaws. An occasional rusted can on top of a lichen-covered stake reminds him that there was once a track, but this track is obliterated in a tangle of bauera and cutting grass among close-spaced ti-trees. The fastest form of progress involves falling backwards to crush the understorey.

As dusk approaches they are only half way down the ridge, suffering from lacerations and extreme thirst. Water is usually a problem in excess rather than deficit in southwest Tasmania and undoubtedly is present in the valleys deep on either side of the ridge. Adrian and Jamie do not have the time or strength to get to it. They idly look at the crayfish burrows among the buttongrass hummocks in which they had set up their tent. Is there a possibility of groundwater?
Adrian excavates a well with the poo trowel while Jamie puts together a water gathering and filtering kit, which consists of the screw top lid of the tamari bottle and a handkerchief. Gritty water tastes much better than no water. Pity about the flavour of the handkerchief.

It takes Jamie and Adrian most of another full scrub-bashing day to get to Craycroft Crossing, where they fall upon the Picton River tin mugs in hand. After two days seeing no-one they find themselves in an overpopulated hub, as people pour out of the Arthur Range in response to deteriorating weather. The small tin shed has graffiti celebrating the numbers of biting March flies that inhabitants had despatched while languishing there in sunnier weather. Jamie and Adrian camp on the YoYo Track near the river, under giant stringybark trees. Jamie cannot sleep through terror of
them falling, but the real danger is probably being washed away by a rising river.

The next camping site is below Luckman’s Lead, named after a couple Jamie knows, so recent was the first known climb of Federation Peak. Adrian and Jamie desultorily fiddle with their heavy climbing gear and pick ticks from each other as they wait for the rain to stop and the cloud to lift off the range.

The route up Luckman’s Lead goes straight up hill, maximising track erosion from the large number of people who follow on the path of Leo and Jesse. Eventually the route difficulty wends its way through tangled rainforest scrub, up and down along the line of crags that constitute the range. Adrian and Jamie have an uncomfortable camp in this scrub, just below Stuart’s Saddle. They had heard that the skeleton of Stuart still partly protrudes from a pile of rocks placed to conceal his corpse, but are too exhausted to seek it out. They feel very brave and adventurous.

Two days later, as Adrian and Jamie triumphantly camp by a small lake on a plateau just below the peak, a lone mature woman with grey hair nonchalantly puts up a tent straight from childhood games of cowboys and Indians. She does not seem to be burdened with climbing ropes. Bravura is deflated.

This reality check does not stop Adrian and Jamie taking their climbing gear on the final stage of the conquest of Federation Peak. They proceed along a ledge that places them below the peak, but a long way above Lake Geeves almost vertically below. They use the climbing gear on the way up, although they do not really need it. It is lucky that they do not really need it because, in retracing their steps back to camp, they realize that they had not learnt how to use a rope to go downhill, without leaving the rope behind.

The summit is small and slightly crowded. An old man up there tells Adrian and Jamie that he has climbed up Moss Ridge, the
alternative route, that day and would be back at his car in two days. Jamie and Adrian had spent a week getting there.

Jamie looks around, ready to savour the ultimate 360° wilderness scene. A small chink of the new and not really improved Lake Pedder is clearly visible.

Although packs are not getting any lighter Adrian and Jamie are, as an effect of the interaction between extreme physical exertion and rationed macrobiotic food. Propelled by the thought of junk food and a shower, Adrian and Jamie abandon their planned Western Arthurs traverse and flee across the Huon Plains to Scots Peak where a car awaits. They make as much walking distance in two days as in the previous week. Jamie has the details of a few quadrats pencilled in a small notebook, as well as a small plastic bag with mysterious plant fragments, the raw material to produce a learned paper on the alpine vegetation of the Eastern Arthurs and Mount Picton.

_Editing the world_

The Eastern Arthurs and Pictons paper is to be written in an office in a tin shed next to a dusty road on the campus of the University of the South Pacific in Suva, where Jamie takes his second six month study leave in 1978. The Institute of Natural Resources, as the tin shed is called, also has an Indian typist with nothing to do, and no inclination to do anything, and another visitor from Australia who occasionally desultorily peers into aquaria. In the days before personal computers, or even word processors, Jamie uses a typewriter to create his contributions to the scientific endeavour. He returns to the shed one morning to find that his manuscript has blown into the waste paper basket, long emptied. He stoically recreates the paper among the alternating red dust storms and rain storm cacophonies.
Jamie selects California for his first six month study leave in 1975, largely because he wants to see what Australia would be like in a few decades, but also because he knows someone there.

Len Bowden is in the vanguard of the remote sensing revolution, with access to all the American spy plane imagery. Jamie puts him up when he visits Hobart because he likes having other adults than his first wife around. He finds that the presence of visitors or lodgers defuses potential argument bombs, as well as being interested in getting to know people. Sue is often less enthusiastic, in this case fleeing with their daughter to her mum in Melbourne.

Jamie takes Len down to the Tasman Peninsula where Len takes a photo of a eucalypt forest and a nineteenth century house with apple orchard overlooking the coast.

Len reinforces Jamie’s conclusion that, if he wants to achieve in nature conservation, he will be more effective as a scientist than as an activist.

Len more than returns Jamie’s hospitality, organising some teaching work in Riverside that enables Jamie and Sue to afford the trip, and even giving them his Californian bed with ceiling mirror to sleep in the night they arrive. The facility is not used as intended, as a result of a synergistic reaction between Len’s cocktails and 18 hours on a plane with a young child.

Jamie asks Len whether there was any vegetation survey work that urgently needs to be done in California. The native grasslands seemed to have been long gone, but a related community dominated by the sort of semi-woody floriferous shrubs one usually finds in an herbaceous border still survives, although under constant threat. This Californian coastal sage scrub becomes the main focus of Jamie’s research work in California.

Jamie and Chuck Hutchinson, one of Len’s PhD students, are lent Len’s monstrously wide and flat research vehicle to quadrat the
sage scrub to death. Neither know any of the plants when they start, relying on the local university herbarium botanist to do identifications until all are identified

Jamie learns computer programming from some of the other PhD students he befriends so that he can manipulate all these data to write up yet more papers on his typewriter. He feels almost totally at home in California, despite cultural differences like supersocial people, guns, circling helicoptors with flood lights, cheap drugs of all kinds, crap food, consumerism as a patriotic duty, ceiling mirrors, cocktails, close social distances, cowboy hats, flat and wide cars and lack of access to the coast. Yet, once back in Australia, he instantly clicks out of it, as if California is another world, which it is.

Len dies soon afterwards, his heart failing from a surfeit of good things. Chuck becomes a director of a Remote Sensing Centre in Arizona. Coastal sage scrub starts to be noticed as an object for nature conservation.

A couple of days after returning to Tasmania, Jamie is taken by Parks by boat down the D’Entrecasteaux Channel to bless the controversial compulsory acquisition of Partridge Island. Only forest and glaciated uplands can be seen. Dolphins frolic. Gannets dive. Jamie is home.

Jamie wants to learn about tropical vegetation on his second study leave. The least dangerous place outside Australia with a university in the wet tropics appears to be Fiji. Sue, Jamie, Nonie and baby Alistair are about to become the only Europeans on a Suvan street, where Melanesian and Indian Fijians also live and get on pretty well.

On the windowless buses with blinds to protect from rain, Melanesian passengers groan when an Indian driver puts on Indian music, and Indian passengers groan when Melanesian music is
played. The few Europeans are stoic in response to both forms of execrable entertainment. Sue and Jamie enjoy the passing around of their young child between the Melanesian women who joyously cry ‘lebu lebu’.

As in California, Jamie participates in the local drug culture, kava in this case. He walks to the local shop to get a paper bag of basmati rice when a group of male Melanesians, sitting in a circle around a container filled with grey muddy water, beckon him to join them. They take it in turns to scoop out half a coconut husk filled with grey mud, then skoll. Polite clapping follows each skoll. Jamie soon realizes why the liquid is drunk so quickly and thinks a good clap is a very appropriate response. His brain shifts into the sort of state labelled as ‘stoned’ in the 1970s. The gift of a packet of fine kava is the equivalent to the gift of wine or six pack in Australia in greasing social relations, so Jamie drinks a lot of the stuff.

There is a young plant ecologist in the University of the South Pacific, Dave Hassall. Dave and Jamie work together on the vegetation of Mount Korobaba near Suva. They collect the data together one day a week, then Jamie spends the rest of the week trying to identify their specimens in the Suva Herbarium.

Dave, who later runs a highly successful ecological consulting company, visits Hobart once. Jamie and his second wife, Christina, go with him to the Casino, where none of them had been before. They admire the size and glossiness of the cockroaches, but otherwise cannot see the point of it.

Like most papers Jamie writes, the Fijian ones are ignored for several decades, but then become more and more popular among a select audience, who demand pdfs by email in typical direct Melanesian fashion. One place, the Sigatoka sand dunes, is made a national park on the strength of the paper describing its vegetation,
although much of its vegetation was noted as badly degraded in the self-same article.

**Long walk reprise**

The human brain treats long bushwalks as it treats childbirth. Somehow, despite the horrors of the first trip, Adrian and Jamie convince themselves that it would be a good idea to walk from the Walls of Jerusalem to Lake St Clair through trackless country, and even look forward to it. Adrian’s dad and Bob Cotgrove are persuaded to join Adrian and Jamie for the first part of the journey, a stratagem that avoids retracing steps. While Jamie and Adrian abandon the climbing gear, they are still macrobiotic. Oats, brown rice and tahini are not enough. By day five, somewhere in the Mountains of Jupiter, Adrian and Jamie resolve to kill and eat the next snake they see. This resolve must have transmitted through the life force field. Despite the sunny weather, they see no more snakes.

![Adrian’s dad, Jamie and Bob Cotgrove at Walls of Jerusalem](image)
CHAPTER SEVEN
DOING SOMETHING

Stalin of the TCT

During the 1970s, the alpine ecosystems Jamie visits in summer provide a contrast to the coastal and near coastal ecosystems he collects data from in the breaks between his teaching during the rest of the year. His first really big project is on Tasmanian coastal heath. Sam Lake, a stream ecologist in the Zoology Department suggests to the Tasmanian Conservation Trust that an application for a National Estate Grant to document variation within and the conservation status of coastal heath is a good idea. It certainly appeals to Bruce Davis, a member of the granting committee. He is a political scientist who has written a paper on the gifting by the Tasmanian government of much of the heath of northeastern Tasmania for destruction by British Tobacco. When the TCT gains the grant, Jamie agrees to organise the survey, the first of many.

The Tasmanian Conservation Trust is one of those conservation organisations that writes polite letters to government, newspapers and industry, lobbies on issues and participates in committees purportedly dedicated to solving conservation issues. Jamie’s conscience impels him to become the secretary of this young, but already august, body, after being invited to join by Heather Felton, the wife of Ken, a bushwalking forester. Both Ken and Heather disappear from the TCT Council when wood-chipping becomes a major issue.

As the Communist Party in Russia found out in Stalin, the secretary is the most powerful person in any organisation. His education makes Jamie well aware of this precedent. Jamie takes advantage of his position to advocate more radical positions on issues than the very conservative council, the turgid meetings of which are almost
as bad as the fund raisers he feels obliged to attend. All he really wants to do in his own time is to be in nature, garden, read and play card and board games with friends while loosening his brain and behaviour with psychotropic substances and the music of the times. Socialising over sausages with conservation zealots and conservatives is not his idea of fun. At the meetings, the time stealers annoy him the most. They never volunteer to actually do anything, like write letters and submissions, just pontificate at length on all subjects.

Ideologues and other easily roused creatures also gain something from membership of councils of non-government organisations. Their manoeuvrings and confrontations also waste time during which Jamie could have been in more pleasant company. However, a few of the council members are people Jamie would have been happy to socialise with, not that any of them drink as much as he does at the time, or even like recreational drinking.

Pat Wessing is Jamie’s favourite. She has grown out of the zealot stage as she develops from a lithe bushwalker into a corpulent divorced geography teacher with three teenage kids, but has further developed a capacity for mischief at the expense of developers. When a company proposes to mine limestone on the slopes of Precipitous Bluff, in the heart of the southwest wilderness, Pat takes up their mining exploration lease when they delay renewing it. She has a way of admonishing the other side that makes them feel like naughty little boys who could be forgiven if they do the right thing. The forces of darkness are yet to enlist the numerous women who represent them today. Pat, when president of the TCT, prevents Precipitous Bluff from being mined and logged, partly by acceding to a swap of the western part of the Hartz Mountains National Park for an extension of the Southwest National Park. The government minister who gets this deal through says that he would certainly mine if there were diamonds there, but that there was
plenty of limestone elsewhere. Jamie wonders if this outcome would always be the case given that the Labor Party was intent on never-ending, exponential economic growth.

Pat’s accession to this deal on behalf of the TCT raises the wrath of many of the young active conservationists, who are already seeking alternative organizational structures through which to save the western wilderness. Before most leave the TCT after a divisive council election which they lose, there is a meeting in which Kevin Kiernan, Bob Graham and Jamie work at trying to draw the boundary of the reserve they want for Southwest Tasmania. Jamie is a bit dubious about extending it to take in the Arve, seeing that a lot of that area has already been logged. He feels that, if one is advancing the proposition that logging is destructive to natural values, one should not argue for logged areas to be placed in reserves.

While the focus of most of the active conservationists is on preventing the Hydro destroying more of the sacred wilderness, as they are indeed planning to do, the few active people in the TCT focus on nature conservation in the more settled parts of the State, and on forestry. One of Jamie’s first contributions to the workings of the TCT is to critique the 1974 Forwood papers, which presaged a massive expansion of logging for both sawlog and pulpwood and an accelerating destruction of natural bush for plantation establishment.

**Frolics with foresters**

The 1970s foresters are used to being conservation good guys, protecting the bush from evil agriculturalists, redneck incendiariists and pastoralists, and turning degraded forests into serried arrays of vigorously upthrusting young trees. The foresters are proud that they have finally worked out how to regenerate eucalypts in wet
forests, by clearfelling, regeneration burning and sowing, and look forward to the application of this technique throughout the forests of Tasmania. They are rapt that the Japanese wanted to buy as many boatloads of chipped up eucalypts as can be produced, seeing it as an opportunity to extract sawlogs from forests that otherwise do not justify the costs of roading and as an incentive to prevent the farmers from turning yet more forested land into pasture.

Murray Cunningham, one of the three commissioners of the Forestry Commission, sits next to Jamie in the small plane that is taking the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council to inspect the cleared land the PWS had purchased from the British Tobacco Company, so that the wildlife could have something to graze.

The Mount William National Park is set aside to save the Forester Kangaroo when British Tobacco is given most of the northeast. It does not include the diminutive Mt William and consists of some of the poorest land in the northeast, so the kangaroos offend by grazing on the British Tobacco pastures.

Murray and Jamie are flown over a State Forest where some of the first clearfells for woodchips had taken place. Murray sighs in pleasure at the scarred landscape below. When Jamie suggests to him that forestry might be better off planting trees close to the mills and export points, rather than cutting into wilderness forests he says that they would like to do both.

Jamie thinks that most of the foresters are nice people who think that they are doing the right thing by the forests and their society. They even have their lunches by the four wheel drive in blackened clearfell coupes rather than sitting on a mossy rock in a sylvan glade by a tinkling stream as is Jamie’s preference.

Perhaps they are averse to leeches, but Jamie suspects that this is not the reason, but rather that they see the blackened forest in the same way he sees his freshly dug vegetable garden. He has many
lunches among the stumps, as the foresters see him as a scientist who can be potentially persuaded to their point of view, as opposed to the growing number of ‘dark greenies’ who they frame as ignorant, irrational and emotional.

A nice place for lunch

**Jamie’s scientific mission**

In inner reality, Jamie is prone to bursting out into tears when he sees newly destroyed bush and has long been convinced that the jobs and economic growth that the foresters value are illusions that are destroying all living things, not to mention rocks. His mission in life is simple – minimise harm to native bush, plants and animals.

As there seems to be a surfeit of people willing to take action in the streets and wild against the destroyers, he decides to be one of the few scientists not working for the interests of the developers.
Rather, he wants to undertake and help implement research that might facilitate their repulsion.

Science is a slightly hazardous way to progress a political program, as the basic idea of much of it is to try to reject the hypotheses of which you are most fond. In later years Jamie will find that unconscious conservation of threatened plant species occurs as a result of clearfelling and overgrazing and that one does not have to reserve tall eucalypt forest to protect mosses and liverworts. However, what is needed in the 1970s is not hypothesis testing.

There is a substantial part of the scientific endeavour that describes reality, rather than testing hypotheses about it. Jamie experiences the reservation of areas of land in Tasmania, simply because he has written descriptive scientific papers about them. Before he stops being involved in environmental impact assessments, when he realizes that they are a ritual rather than a serious attempt to prevent or mitigate environmental damage, he finds it difficult to assess the significance of the bits of bush the developers who pay for the assessments want to destroy.

The alpine and coastal heath surveys are his first attempts to describe the variation in ecosystems in Tasmania and assess the needs for protection. The forestry people like the treelessness of these vegetation types, one Chief Commissioner even offering to donate any important heathland on his land to the Parks and Wildlife Service.

**Tony Moscal’s scrub allergy**

Jamie’s first study that eventually creates any difficulties for foresters is initiated by Tony Moscal, a refugee from Rumania. With an appearance remarkably similar to many of the ossified inhabitants of Pompey, Tony is a Roman-descent Rumanian, not
one of the inferior shambling giants, remarkably like Jamie, who the Romans efficiently displaced to the Carpathian Mountains.

During the chaos of the Second World War, Tony flees to Germany to avoid prospective doom as a Rumanian submariner. He eventually finds his way to Tasmania as a displaced person. He does not talk about the war years very much, with Jamie at least, although once he comments that, when fighters are looking for targets to strafe, one needs to stand stock still, any movement attracting a stream of bullets. He also tells Jamie about a period after the war ended when he was one of the crew of a ship dumping toxic waste in the North Sea.

Tony inhales a lot of toxic waste, chain smoking most of his working life as a painter of industrial sites. Even on the monumental walking trips through the impenetrable scrub, for which he is rightly famed, a line of smoke marks his way. He eventually becomes allergic to scrub, but not tobacco.

Apart from tobacco, Tony’s staples on walking trips are black bread, dried sausage and halva. Jamie’s one long walking trip with
Tony is at the time of the Franklin Blockade. Jamie does not join the blockade because he thinks it a bad look for an impartial scientist and because he is not into self-punishment as a method to get his way. Tony does not join it because he is too angry about the prospective destruction of the Franklin River to trust himself to be non-violent. Here they sit, on the top of the remote Pyramid Mountain, contemplating a stray orange-bellied parrot, while friends and future colleagues are arrested in the distance.

The adventure of bushwalking initially attracts Tony to western Tasmania, but soon he develops an interest in the plants that are only found in Tasmania, the Tasmanian endemics, of which there are many, especially in the western wilderness areas. He makes detailed copperplate notes of the occurrence of endemic species in most of the most remote places in Tasmania, collects them and takes many quarter plate photos.

He gains funding through the TCT to get a break from painting to continue his work on endemics, but has great difficulty turning the information he collects into the sort of reports that impress the granting bodies. Chris Harwood once compliments Jamie that he is pretty good at turning sows ears into silk purses. It has to be a pretty lousy set of data for Jamie not to see a good story in it. He is therefore conscripted to be the creative co-director of the Tony Moscal show along with Mick Brown, the ecologist from the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The current project is the central East Coast, a region largely covered by forest, which seems to have quite a few endemics of its own.

By this stage of his life, after bringing up his children on his own, Tony has very little time for anything else but his work on endemics. At unpredictable times, at Jamie’s home or work, Tony turns up, ignores everyone else in the vicinity and buttonholes Jamie for as long as Jamie can endure on the subject of endemic plants. Jamie puts up with it because he shares Tony’s love of the
plants, values the information he collects and does not want to hurt his feelings.

In later years, when Tony switches his passion to mosses and liverworts, Jamie may have been one of the few people he talks to (he does not talk with anyone), as he spends most of his existence when not in the bush peering down his microscope in his house at Midway Point. Tony emerges for a quick counter tea, then submerges again.

Finding fame in the kitchen

Jamie has Tony’s fanatical data collection to thank for the major part of whatever scientific fame he possesses. Faced with a huge pile of photocopied sheets, originally written in copperplate, he decides to look at the individual distributions of all the east coast endemics in his study area at the scale of one square kilometre. He does this mapping on a gigantic piece of graph paper on his kitchen table. Some squares have many endemic species, many have none. He adds up the numbers for each square, thinking that he could use them to gain priorities for conservation action. Looking at the data, it is obvious to him that this procedure, previously adopted by a large number of conservation scientists, is not going to work. Important unreserved species occur by themselves and the squares with the highest scores having pretty much the same set of species.

In response, he devises an iterative method for prioritising the squares. This involves selecting the one that best fills reservation gaps, assuming that it is reserved, recalculating all the scores for all squares, selecting the new best square and repeating this process until all species are notionally well-reserved.

He is the first person to think of and publish this sort of reserve selection process, which has since been the subject of a huge literature, and even some application. Jamie was aware of its
originality at the time, and of the potential for developing a career developing the technique, but decided that doing more surveys of more ecosystems would help nature more, which it probably did, and result in more pleasurable fieldwork, which it certainly did.

Nevertheless, he had the good career sense to send a paper describing the technique to an international conservation journal, admittedly four years after it surfaced in the report on the conservation of the endemic plants of the central east coast and at the same time as he published a paper with Chris Harwood using the technique on wetland communities. A quarter of a century later, all the reserves recommended in the east coast paper exist in reality, as do most of those recommended in the wetlands report.

There must have been something about the kitchen table in Jamie’s rented half house in York Street, or perhaps it was a by-product of the mental and physical disruption that occurred when he left his

*The kitchen table 1980*
first wife in late 1978, because he also devises the first method for measuring wilderness loss in the same place.

When Jamie first hears of wilderness, he finds the idea silly and amusing, a vague spiritual concept that seems to ignore the inescapable fact that almost all of the land on the planet, including western Tasmania, has been well-used by people for many thousands of years. As wilderness gains positive traction with the public, and Jamie falls more and more in love with the Tasmanian bush, he begins to see that there could be advantages in making the concept more concrete and repeatable, in contrast to the subjectively drawn maps in existing reports, including one authored by Chris Harwood and himself which sports a ‘minimum wilderness boundary’.

*Chris Harwood, minimum wilderness boundaries and Mt Bobs*

Chris Harwood is one of the progeny of Tasmania’s best ever poet, the cerebrally earthy Gwen Harwood, and Bill Harwood, a boat-building linguist in the English Department at the University of Tasmania.

*In the wilderness – Dixons Kingdom*
In the mid-1970s Chris returns to Hobart after completing a PhD on subalpine tree lines with Ralph Slatyer at the Australian National University, filling his time in Hobart with bits and pieces jobs and political activity. He is a member of the Tasmanian Labor Party with strong green principles, hoping to reform from within by attending all their boring barbecues.

Chris Harwood in the 1980s in Canberra

Chris tells Jamie that, as much as he loves research for its own sake, as with his PhD topic, his conscience forces him to do research that would help human beings maintain or improve their environment and social equity. He is definitely not a misanthrope, being into the triple bottom line of sustainability before it is verbalized by anyone. Jamie suspects that Chris can be persuaded to sacrifice some of nature for human well-being, whereas Jamie thinks that nature needs more help than humans, of whom there appear to be a tad too many for planetary comfort.

Dick Jones, Ralph Chapman and others set up a radical interdisciplinary Centre for Environmental Studies in the University of Tasmania at a time when academics actually run the place, rather than business-minded bureaucrats. Chris attaches himself to the Centre.
He works with others to produce an alternative to hydro-electric development, promoting an energy efficient future for Tasmania. He also works with Jamie on a publication for the TCT arguing for the establishment of plantations near mills instead of trashing wilderness forests for paper pulp. The minimum wilderness boundary is designed to protect places like Mt Bobs and Precipitous Bluff, to the degree to which plantations could produce savings. Chris and Jamie latch on to the fact that most of the cost of wood lies in its transport and the creation of the roads along which the transport takes place.

If one plants trees on second rate and abandoned farmland near mills or export points one saves enormous amounts of money compared to blasting new roads into wilderness forest and transporting wood over long distances, especially with low discount rates.

Chris and Jamie are especially attached to Mt Bobs, as they had been persuaded to survey its vegetation and landforms in an attempt to make it scientifically sacred and thereby protect it against the foresters. They walk in from where the logging road stops, at Farmhouse Creek, the future scene of the crucifixion of Bob Brown by forest workers.

It is only a one day walk into the valley below Mt Bobs, but it turns out to be another one of those horrible wilderness tests of character. Every few dozen steps on the first third of the track they clamber across giant eucalypt trunks, felled by a past conflagration. The second third of the track is cut through a paperbark and ti-tree swamp – sharp narrow stumps protrude from black mud along a narrow line. The relief in gaining the last third of the route, through a tangled rainforest, does not last long as they weave overstressed bodies between the horizontal stems of deciduous beech. In the late afternoon they break out into a plain and head across it to the King Billy pine rainforest next to Lake Sydney where they plan to camp.
the night. Lake Sydney is famed for the sinkhole that makes it nature’s own hydro-electric impoundment. When it rains heavily, which is often at Mt Bobs, the lake spills in to the sinkhole at such speed that it fills, and Lake Sydney rises well above its normal level, which is controlled by the height of the saddle between the sinkhole and the lake. When the rain stops the sinkhole drains, leaving a bare apron right around the lake. Chris and Jamie are keen to see this wonder so wander off to view it, leaving their packs and tents in the forest.

As the sun sets, sated with wonder, they head back to camp. It is black inside the rainforest. They cannot see their camp or remember where to go. Half an hour later they stumble on their packs by accident. Jamie is shivering with cold. Chris tries to start a fire. Nothing burns until Chris remembers the dead leaves of the caulescent pandani.

The next day Chris and Jamie set off early for the Boomerang, the mudstone arcuate alpine ridge above the camp and to the east of Mt Bobs. There they see flattened plum pines and cushion plants, pushed to their doom by the wind from west to east across fjældmark, leaving trails of dead stems behind them. They cross the saddle separating the Boomerang from Mt Bobs, where most of the dolerite plateau is covered with undulating cushion plants in colourful mosaics and small pools, with the occasional quizzical pandani head peering from behind a rock. Jamie wanders away from Chris to a block stream to take in the view over lines of mountains to the Southern Ocean. The rocks shift, trapping his foot. He cannot move his foot or the block trapping it. Thinking of the skeleton of Stuart in his saddle, he yells in a state of panic for Chris, who hears and is able to extricate him.

As if Jamie had not already demonstrated his total hopelessness as a bushwalker, he suggests a short cut to the camp on the return journey. Chris and Jamie find themselves struggling over the tops
of prickly scoparia shrubs, then suspended over a tall cliff. They repeat the laceration process, uphill this time, and return the way they came.

One of Chris Harwood’s acquaintances from his undergraduate years in the Botany Department at the University of Tasmania is Julian Amos, later to become a Queensland resident, a member of the board of the HEC and a spokesperson for the forestry industry, but then the great white hope of radical youth for social and environmental reform. Those who elect him to the Lower House of the State Parliament look forward to the legalisation of marijuana and protection of the environment against rampaging bureaucracy and industry.

They are sorely disappointed on both counts. Julian becomes a Minister in the State Government, defending the dumping of industrial waste, jarosite, off Tasman Island, and recognises the obvious impossibility of drug law reform. Jarosite Jules, as he is soon to be known by some, employs Chris Harwood as his advisor in the politically volatile lead up to the next great hydro-electric development planned for western Tasmania, the Franklin-Lower Gordon Scheme.

**Back to the kitchen table**

On his kitchen table Jamie works out a way to quantify the prospective loss of wilderness to the various developments that threaten it, inspired by the isowild concept of Paul Smith. He talks to Chris Harwood and Robin Haney about his ideas for working out a wilderness value based on time distance from mechanised access, direct distance and the arc of visibility of disturbance.

He then works out the value that would remain after a development, to get wilderness loss figures that could be a quantitative
counterweight to the money to be made from hydro-electric development or forestry.

Chris somehow persuades Julian Amos to give Jamie some money to work out the wilderness losses that would be associated with prospective hydro-electric developments. Jamie ends up doing almost all the data assembling himself and submits a report to Julian.

The response is slightly unexpected. Jamie is asked to visit the Vice-Chancellor of his university who attacks his economic analysis on the basis of advice from his economists. How anyone could imagine that bushwalkers spend less than $100.00 in visiting Tasmania is beyond Jamie, but obviously not beyond expert economists. The VC is obviously responding to pressure from the HEC. Jamie tells him his economists are wrong and why. Nothing further happens, as VCs have very little power in in the late 1970s.

A decade later, when Alec Lazenby is the VC and Peter Byers the power behind the throne, other complainants approach the VC to silence Jamie, this time on forests. They are given a brief lecture on academic freedom. However, the forest industries have their revenge under yet a later VC by specifically excluding Jamie from any of the funding that flowed from the first Co-operative Research Centre in Forestry, possibly as a condition of their contributing funds to it. Jamie finds out about this exclusion when a PhD student working in the forestry area is told that she would have to remove him as her supervisor to get research funding, which she subsequently did, with the desired effect. Jamie was a bit upset, not only to lose a PhD student, but also because her topic on soil loss resulting from forestry was too important to leave to those with possible vested interests.

The foresters actually see the point of Jamie’s wilderness loss analysis and repeat it on their own. The analyses give them the
opportunity to design new roads to have the maximum negative effect on wilderness values. Otherwise, despite being published in *Search* in 1980, the technique has minimal effect, with a later and inferior method of mapping wilderness gaining the approval of the Commonwealth bureaucrats and applied in the Regional Forest Agreement process.

Robyn Sim and Tony Park assess unnatural aesthetic value

**The hopeless marketer**

Later on, with Louise Mendel, Jamie devises a method of mapping the natural aesthetic resource. He also devises a vegetation mapping method that could be used to produce management priority maps. The latter is sort of used in the mapping of the vegetation of the world heritage area. The former is ignored, despite its elegance.

If you want to get ahead in academia, you not only have to do something original, you have also to embark on a sustained publicity campaign directed to recruiting followers. Jamie gets
bored easily and dislikes plane travel, so moves on to the next research problem before consolidating the marketing of the product of the last. In fact, he does no marketing, not even bothering to send reprints of papers to those who might be interested. He classifies advertising as an unoriginal sin and tosses marketing in with it.

The general Australian ethos in the 70s and 80s is not to big note yourself for fear of being labelled as having ‘more front than Myers’. Jamie does not even bother giving papers at academic conferences which he occasionally attends for the socialising and field trips. The first paper presentation he ever makes is a decade after becoming an academic, at the Academy of Science building in Canberra. He only speaks because he is asked to, and attempts to make fun of the whole process, putting up a totally incomprehensible slide after saying that it was his first paper, but that he had observed so many he knew what to do. No-one laughs.
CHAPTER EIGHT
MEDIA, WILDERNESS AND WORLD HERITAGE

The Wilderness Society and conservation theatre

The 1970s and early 1980s are a period of innovation and expansion in the environmental movement. The Australian Conservation Foundation is taken over by green radicals such as Dick Jones, Sam Lake and Geoff Mosely. The first Green Party in the world, the United Tasmania Group, participates in an election in Tasmania. The Tasmanian Wilderness Society is founded by people like Helen Gee, Kevin Kiernan, Geoff Holloway and Bob Brown to act as a radical counterpoint to the conservative Tasmanian Conservation Trust. Bob encourages Jamie to join. He doesn’t, although Robin Haney and Jamie attend a meeting of the incipient society in 1979.

The meeting is held on the wool-producing property of Bob Graham and Helen Gee near Buckland. The people who set up the society just want it as a vehicle for their action and publicity, and could not care less if it had any members apart from themselves, or a constitution, or any of the other appurtenances of your typical non-government organisation. As Robin and Jamie lounge in the sunshine adjacent to a stream on a short grassland garnished with sheep and wallaby poo, they witness an archetypal primordial struggle between the powers of creative chaos and those of stultifying organisation.

Peter Storey has organised a membership drive and argues for expansion through traditional NGO structures. His adult point of view eventually wins to the degree that the society, expands to a national organisation with many fund-raising enterprises (Leunig’s incorrect prophecy that ‘there will always be a wilderness shop’),
then almost collapses in a constitutional battle over further corporatization.

Those who achieve in conservation in the 1980s tend to be wild, adventurous and passionate. Helen Gee is one of the most irrepressible. She is the prime mover in creating the influential “South West Book” which raises the profile of the areas the Wilderness Society is out to protect. She is later to produce a book on the forest campaigns. On the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Advisory Committee she successfully pushes for the removal of the power line along the Lyell Highway as well as entertaining the other members with her irreverence.

Some of the best moments in conservation theatre come from Norm Sanders, an American refugee with a PhD in geomorphology from Jamie’s department in the University of Tasmania and the first Green-inclined person to be elected to the Tasmanian State Parliament. As the Parliament of Tasmania votes to drown the Franklin River, Norm asks a small flock of sheep on the Parliamentary lawns ‘Do you want a dam?’ They obligingly go ‘baaaah’.

Norm also advertises the wood stoves he sells as ‘the best thing to do with the Mercury newspaper, preferably before reading’. The Mercury is rabid in its support of development at the time and has a reputation of never accurately reporting anything a conservationist says. Jamie suspects that the lack of accuracy is more general than that, as even his sober, non-greenish press interviews are reported way off reality. The sports pages are accurate, however. This has now changed, with an occasional piece of accurate environmental reporting and an occasional inaccuracy in the reporting of Australian Football League scores.

Most conservation theatre is highly ritualised. Marches along main streets with people carrying banners and placards, and occasionally
wearing koala costumes, are followed by speeches to the faithful. Boring arguments about how many people were there gain brief media exposure. Police divert traffic, permits are gained, everyone attending feels virtuous.

The blockade of the Lower Gordon Dam site is far more edgy, with barges being besieged by rubber duckies, and mass arrests that make outstanding television footage Jamie views from his parents’ lounge room in Melbourne. A large proportion of the locals are less than pleased to have thousands of greenies in and about their towns, and unlike the greenies, who are trained in passive resistance, they are used to resolving disputes using violence.

Queenstown

A Premier of the State, Robin Gray, encourages the propensities of the locals by wearing boxing gloves when exhorting the Queenstown residents to resist the greenies. A common car sticker in the west is ‘The only wilderness is between a greenies ears’, fleshy extrusions obviously well worth boxing.

In 1976, well before Robin waves his gloves, Jamie is nearly a victim of the west coast, when, walking from his hotel to the venue of a Royal Society symposium on western Tasmania, a car full of local rednecks who are offended by his beard and lack of haircut leave the bitumen to try to strike him dead. They do not miss by
much. The good people of Queenstown later poison Jamie with a prawn sandwich, accidentally getting closer to a culmination of their mission.

**World heritage**

The Franklin blockade moves the Hawke Government to use its foreign affairs powers to intervene to save threatened world heritage. Like wilderness, world heritage is adopted as a potential saviour by those trying to save western Tasmania. The car stickers that read ‘Western Tasmania Wilderness – World Heritage’ are produced without any great understanding of the meaning of world heritage, and at a time when no-one has suggested that western Tasmania is a world-beating place. The sticker proves prophetic. World heritage does prove to be a saviour.

The listing of three large western Tasmanian national parks under an international treaty signed by the earlier national Whitlam government took place when Doug Lowe was Premier in Tasmania. Jamie suspects that the Labor Party under Lowe does not think that world heritage listing will have much effect on ongoing hydro development, as hydro lakes are obviously so much more beautiful than blighted buttongrass plains and rocky gorges.

The Lowe Government is prepared to offer the electorate a choice between a Gordon below Franklin Dam and a Gordon above Franklin Dam when pushed really hard, but cannot conceive of having no more dams. A campaign designed to persuade people to write ‘No Dams’ on the ballot ensues. The triangular dayglow yellow ‘No Dams’ stickers signed by Emma Gunn are everywhere. The campaign is successful enough to blight the legitimacy of the outcome of the referendum. The Labor Party collapses into discord and is soon replaced by the Gray Liberal Government, which is
determined to drown the ‘leech-filled ditch’ of the Franklin River, and incidentally to gain the votes of the workers and their families.

When Kevin Kiernan, Rhys Jones and others publish a paper in *Nature* that shows that a cave next to the Franklin River has evidence of ice age inhabitants, world heritage values come into obvious conflict with the hydro-electric dam that is in the process of being built. The authors of the paper name the cave ‘Fraser’ after the Prime Minister at the time, hoping to influence him to take action. Fraser is replaced by Bob Hawke, partly because of his inaction on the issue.

Although the Hawke Labor government promises to protect world heritage values in the wet tropics and Tasmania, it needs the media hit of the blockade to persuade it to do something. The instruction from Hawke to stop building the dam is followed by an appeal to the High Court to overturn this decision on the grounds that development is a State right under the constitution. This appeal is rejected by a majority of one. The foreign affairs power trumps the development power.
Jamie is in the corridor outside the Geography Department Office when the news comes through. The departmental secretary sobs. Her husband works in the Hydro, which has now suffered a defeat fatal to its power, a defeat that might lose her husband his job. Rejoicing is muted.

**Forest frolics two**

Until 1983 most people in Tasmania inclined to work for the conservation of nature are focused on defeating the plans of the Hydro for western Tasmania. There is a general consensus among conservationists that the chances of making further gains for nature will be maximised if logging became the next target, despite the fact that the most serious impacts on nature in Tasmania are a result of agricultural development. The forestry sector is a much more focused target for action than developers in general, and is threatening the very things, wilderness and world heritage, that seem to have stopped the Hydro in its tracks. This decision puts Jamie in the centre of Tasmanian environmental turmoil as the only scientist who is working on forest conservation issues and wilderness in Tasmania who is not employed by the government. In 1983, he has not had anything much to do with world heritage. This deficit is about to become a surplus.

In the early eighties Jamie’s initiatives in life mainly relate to choosing which research project he becomes consumed in and which plant he should put where in his half acre garden in Sandy Bay Road. He has just finished writing up a conservation survey of the lentic wetlands of eastern Tasmania and the Bass Strait islands. He is about to embark on a Statewide survey of grasslands and grassy woodlands, the vegetation types that he finally realizes need the most conservation attention, inspired by the work of Bob Parsons in Victoria. In forest research, he supervises Dave Bowman who is working on regeneration in gum-topped
stringybark forests, Kath Dickinson, who is working on the effects of clearfelling and burning on dry eucalypt forests and Phil Cullen, who is working on the ecology of King Billy pine and pencil pine. Jamie is also working on a project to map the vegetation of the State at 1:500,000. So, he has a lot to do with the Forestry Commission, despite his major research interests being in non-forest vegetation.

Conservation NGOs and bureaucrats in the Commonwealth Government are determined to keep Jamie on the forest track, so he ends up helping to write a large amount of grey literature on forest conservation. This is certainly not one of his favourite activities, which are collecting and playing with data from the native vegetation of Tasmania, research in the flow with no deadlines, socialising with friends and family, usually under the influence, bushwalking and gardening.

Jamie’s motives for becoming involved in activities that are on his mental list of unpleasant things to do are simple. He hates saying
no to people who are working for goals he believes in, so seldom does. He is far too sensitive to the opinions such people hold of him to excuse himself, especially as these opinions seem to be so high, so much needs to be done and so few people are doing it.

Jamie thinks that he is not the sort of person who pushes themselves on the public stage, visualising himself as more of a back room person, steering outcomes in the right direction without taking any credit or exposure. When he does speak out in public, it is because someone else has organised him to do so. This reticence means that he often publically supports the conservation movement on issues that are not his own highest priorities, although worthy enough. A series of circumstances more or less traps Jamie’s public persona into forests, wilderness and world heritage.

Jamie now thinks that he hates the organisation of advocacy, and equally hates decision-making on timing of public exposure, rather than the public exposure itself. He always enjoys the adrenalin rushes and mental gymnastics associated with interactions with the media and the public. He thinks that he is pretty good at not being trapped into saying something that he would construe as stupid, and in getting the occasional laugh.

In the 1980s, when the Wilderness Society wants scientific certification for those of its positions that Jamie supports, he gets dressed up in items from their respectable clothing collection before fronting the cameras. He refuses to get a haircut, but the more dedicated Wilderness Society people take great pains to look as much as possible like an accountant before fronting the media. The foresters take the opposite approach in sartorial deception, represented by the bearded longhaired forester, Evan Rolley. Looking as though he should be strumming a sitar while smoking dope in a permaculture garden, presents the case for logging in opposition to clean cut greens who most resemble Mormon missionaries.
Jamie’s favourite ever television interview is on the subject of the recent discovery of a large stand of black gum in the area that is about to be drowned under the Meander Dam. The Meander Dam is a project, like the ‘Road to Nowhere’ in the north west, that is devised to get back at the greenies after they prevent similar activities over much of the State and cause to be erected a complicated superstructure of environmental approval processes.

The idea of the dam is to irrigate downstream farms. Although it is obvious right at the start that this project involves massive subsidization of the farmers, development approval is sought. The Tasmanian Conservation Trust objects to the approval and wins its case. The political outrage is deafening, resulting in both the national and State governments getting fully behind the dam, despite their own legislation, which they ignore.

Less than four percent of the black gum forest that was present in Tasmania at the time of the European invasion has survived clearance and inundation. The legalities are that no more clearance is to be allowed. The governments declare that they will solve this problem through offsetting. The ABC Television 7.30 Report asks Jamie to explain this interesting process. With a straight face he suggests that, with immense investment, it might be possible, in compensation for the loss of the drowned stand, to re-establish the black gum forest community on the farmed river flats downstream.

*Part of the 4%*
A project run by the Wilderness Society and South East Forest Alliance to develop a case for listing of the eucalypt forests of south-eastern Australia is Jamie’s first major exposure to the legalities of world heritage.

Margaret Blakers is the organiser of several blokes, one from a State each, and Jamie. They are to write the case. They meet in the kitchen of Margaret’s house in one of the flat northern suburbs of Melbourne. Jamie is shocked at her resolve to destroy large lemon tree in her yard in favor of natives, as he was finding it impossible to get a lemon tree going in his own garden, despite all the urine he bestowed upon the roots of many an expensive advanced specimen. However, the project has the virtue of forcing Jamie to learn something about world heritage, although his major educational experience lay in wait, via the acerbic tongue of Judge Helsham.

The Blakers report is part of the pressure being exerted on the Commonwealth Government to protect wild eucalypt forests, particularly the tall eucalypt forests much favoured for logging. By the mid-1980s, after a highly successful series of environmental campaigns, logging of rainforest in Australia is regarded as akin to peeing on prize petunias.
Peter Dombrovskis, Rob Blakers and nature writing man

When Jamie first meets Margaret Blaker’s lovely younger brother he earnestly introduces himself as: ‘Rob Blakers from Rescue the Rainforest’, which he and many others indeed do. Whether rescuing rainforests or other biomes, Rob is one of several outstanding wilderness photographers whose images help create nature conservation in Australia.

The best of the nature photographers of the 1970s and 1980s is Peter Dombrovskis. In the early 1970s Peter asks Jamie to be the voice on an automated slide show he is setting up to communicate the beauty and spiritual values of western Tasmania. Peter is patient with Jamie’s occasional verbal flow failure. Peter later asks Jamie to write some text about the science of the scenes he depicts in his calendars, through the sale of which he gains his living. Peter must have liked the style Jamie adopts, which is much more scientific than that of the usual nature writer, because he becomes the sole West Wind Press science writer, in calendars, diaries and books. For a decade after Peter’s exogenic heart valve fails on a solitary trip to the Western Arthurs Jamie continues to write to his photographs, as Peter’s widow, Liz, makes sure that his work gains global fame.

Jamie writes exegeses for Peter and Liz Dombrovskis for more than 30 years. While he experiences it as being a bit like being a typecast actor, and comes to dread photographs of water worn rocks, he always enjoys working with Peter, Liz and their designer, Rod Poole, and feels flattered at being a contributor to publications of such beauty, elegance and effect.

Peter, Liz and Jamie all love gardens as well as wilderness. For most of the time Jamie knows them as a couple, Peter and Liz live in the Ferntree house and garden that Jamie had briefly lived in and loved. They are much better gardeners than him, both as plant-
persons and designers. As Peter and Jamie walk around the Ferntree acres, Peter says in a puzzled voice – why did someone place this leatherwood (etc) in such an unsuitable spot? Jamie, the offender, is uncharacteristically quiet, implying that the owners previous to him were guilty.

Peter is never really interested in capturing the scruffy pulchritude of the vegetation of the drier half of the State. Jamie persuades him to include one lovely dry sclerophyll forest photograph in his book on Mount Wellington and his photos of Tasmanian snow gum and yellow gum bark are sublime, but his interest is concentrated on Edenic garden scenes incorporating coastal, rainforest, riparian and alpine ecosystems. He knows the science of these areas, occasionally correcting Jamie’s spelling of scientific names of rather obscure plants. He is interested in the choices Jamie made from his photographs for Jamie’s book on alpine Tasmania, saying that they were not the ones he would have chosen.

Max Angus launching ‘On the Mountain’. Liz Dombrovskis and Rod Poole looking at something.
Rob Blakers is interested in photographing eucalypt forest and manages to capture its spirit, particularly in publications on the Tarkine and Freycinet. He also employs Jamie’s nature writing in his books. The demand for Jamie’s writing in this mode eventually ceases, which is a mercy to Jamie as well as any accidental readers.

Jamie’s fan mail is scant. In his first year of doing the calendar, he has one lovely letter complimenting him on his sensitive prose about a photo of a whale bone on a beach. After that only silence, apart from a comment by a Margaretta Pos comparing his writing unfavourably with that of the nature writer on the Mercury, who is, Jamie reluctantly admits, pretty good at making our feathered friends interesting.

**Forest frolics three**

In the late 1980s an extension of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area becomes the focus of forest campaigns. With the Liberals firmly in control in Tasmania thanks to the redneck vote, the national Labor government can gain votes in the outer suburbs of the big cities of Australia, while not losing any in Tasmania. After a conservation epiphany in the South West of Tasmania by the Labor numbers man, Graham Richardson, Labor decides to set up an inquiry into a possible extension of the WHA under an eminent judge, reputed to be sympathetic to conservation. The judge, an economist and a national parks manager, Peter Hitchcock, make up the Helsham Commission.

Jamie’s more interesting research is displaced by a frenzy of activity related to this inquiry, all ultimately orchestrated by Peter Matthews in the Australian Heritage Commission, who probably has a plan. Jamie certainly does not, apart from taking advantage of any opportunity to achieve nature conservation. Plan or no, the forest values in the areas adjacent to the existing WHA are given a
good working over, even to the extent of collecting new data, in Jamie’s many reports to the Heritage Commission and the Helsham Commission with such titles as: ‘The surviving large stands of old growth wet sclerophyll forest and mixed forest in Tasmania and a discussion of their importance for conservation’.

Jamie works on Christmas Day and Boxing Day in 1987 to finish one report, which is an analysis of wet eucalypt forest communities in Tasmania and their conservation status, meant to impress the outstanding reservation needs for tall forests on the Helsham Commission. At this stage of Jamie’s life, he tends to work pretty much all of the time he does not spend eating and sleeping, although not usually on the type of work he most enjoys.

Other people collect most of the wet forest data, some under extreme difficulties, as the Forestry Commission bans access to the places most in dispute. Members of Jamie’s research group lift trail bikes over barriers, and skulk in public forests in fear of discovery, to complete the data collection.

This particular science game has big stakes, so the foresters repeat much of Jamie’s work to make sure that it is valid. This checking is not always to their advantage. The foresters repeating his research on mapping remaining tall forests discover a large stand of tall mountain ash forest in the Tiger Range that Jamie misses.

Forestry has unlimited resources and eventually lures one of the best conservation ecologists in the State, Mick Brown, from the Parks and Wildlife Service. Mick, as a PWS scientist, incurs the displeasure of the State government when he co-authors a paper that shows that contaminants from jarosite dumping off the continental shelf find their way into seabird fat.

The State government thereafter requires all research articles from PWS to be vetted by the Minister. PWS is progressively strangled by bureaucratic processes and amalgamations until Mick thinks
that he might be able to achieve more for conservation within the Forestry Commission, which he probably does, in a difficult balancing act.

Although Mick does not seem to regret his move, Jamie finds it emotionally difficult to have a friend and co-worker in conservation research working for the foresters, but copes, even when Mick accuses him of wanting to reserve the whole State. Mick says that there is not a bit of bush in the State that does not have conservation value, but that there was no way that all would be reserved.

With the strong support of senior foresters, such as Ken Felton and Tony Mount, Mick develops conservation prioritisation procedures within the Forestry Commission, who initiate a program called ‘Recommended Areas for Protection’, which has a target of 10% of the area of each of the forest types. However, in the late eighties it is wilderness and world heritage that are driving forest conservation, not biodiversity conservation.

Somehow the conservation groups think that the wet eucalypt forest study will sway the Helsham Commission towards recommending a massive expansion of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area into eucalypt forests. Jamie is called to give evidence on this document. As he walks from the coffee shops of Salamanca Place towards the court, Bob Brown stops him, producing from his pocket a coin, obviously indented by a bullet, a coin that saved the life of a relative during one of Australia’s many wars for other countries. Jamie thinks that he is exhorting him to be brave and fight for the wilderness when giving his testimony, but he is not all that sure.

The judge is totally mystified by the wet eucalypt forests report, telling Jamie that he could not see any relevance to the question of world heritage and grilling him on the subject of quadrats. In
retrospect, Jamie has to agree with him. Jamie’s valid argument for world heritage status for western Tasmanian wet eucalypt forests is the globally outstanding nature of the ecological process called the ‘hot fire paradox’ in which tall eucalypts are doomed to death by rainforest in the absence of fire and doomed to death by fire, if fire is too frequent. Details of the distribution of different floristic assemblages of different types of wet eucalypt forest are beside the point for world heritage, although highly apposite for biodiversity conservation planning.

The judge and the economist, in their majority report, are impressed enough by the scientific certification of Mt Bobs and the Boomerang by Jamie and Chris to recommend their inclusion in the world heritage area. They also like a particular mountain face,
for scenic reasons, and Exit Cave, possibly partly because one of 
the few witnesses they do not seem to despise is Arthur Clarke, a 
down to earth caver of Aboriginal descent. Tall eucalypt forest and 
the ‘hot fire paradox’ leave them cold.

Peter Hitchcock, in his minority report, argues that a very large 
addition should be made to the world heritage area, particularly to 
incorporate large and diverse areas of tall eucalypt forest.

Jamie is one of a large group of natural scientists who are 
signatories to a widely publicised repudiation of the majority 
report, as the NGOs work hard to get the Hawke government to 
accept the minority report. The decision is to be made by the Labor 
Cabinet. Graham Richardson, the environmental minister at the 
time, wants a new world heritage boundary for consideration.

Peter Hitchcock and Jamie are asked to do the job, with the 
assistance of a casual helper. They are given 2% of the sustained 
yield of Tasmania’s forests to place within the boundary in a way 
that maximises world heritage values. This 2% is not much, 
especially as the sustained yield calculations they have to work 
with are those of the Forestry Commission, which seem to be a bit 
on the high side in close proximity to the existing world heritage 
area boundary. They decide to maximise the content of old growth 
mountain ash forests as these best epitomise the hot fire paradox.

To include a mountain ash stand on the Derwent River near Beech 
Creek they have to create a long salient from the existing boundary. 
In compensation, they have to leave out the largest contiguous area 
of tall eucalypt forest in the world to the north of this salient, leave 
a hole inside the proposed boundary south of the Hartz, where they 
are convinced the sustained yield estimations were wildly in excess 
of reality, and leave out a large area of tall forest on either side of 
the Huon River, which again seems to have exaggerated yields.
They are able to include the Lemonthyme forests, which are not large or particularly productive, and, apart from the Hartz Hole, the tall forest south of Farmhouse Creek. They bank on world heritage status preventing new roading to uncut tall forests in the Hartz Hole and on the west bank of the Derwent. The boundary does not look great, being well less than smooth.

While Peter and Jamie are drawing a boundary for Graham Richardson, an alternative boundary is being drawn for the primary industries minister. This extends the WHA by adding adjacent fire-damaged and poor quality forests, leaving out the best of the adjacent tall forests that Peter and Jamie are in the process of selecting.

![Image](image.jpg)

*Where to put the boundary?*

Jamie is flown up to Canberra as part of an NGO delegation, presumably designed to press the Richardson solution or larger. It is a bit like a Geography excursion at the University of Melbourne in the opaqueness of the exact mission. While waiting to see someone or other the delegation hangs around interminably in a
sympathetic parliamentarian’s office in the old Parliament House. Bob Brown lies on the floor meditating. Jamie fidgets, not quite knowing why he is there or what he can do.

It turns out that members of cabinet and their advisers are to talk with the group. Jamie does not say a single word. Bob Hawke, a short man in a pink shirt with well-coiffed hair, smoking a giant cigar, gets straight to the point, trying to extract a promise from the NGOs that they would be satisfied with the Richardson outcome. Bob Brown politely refuses to supply such a commitment, while pointing out the manifold political and moral benefits of the Richardson option compared with the alternative.

The acceptance of the Richardson option is a very nice thing, with Paul Keating reportedly clinching it by saying ‘What the fuck have the Tasmanians ever done for us?’ John Kerin, the minister in charge of primary industries, and possibly a closet greeny, suggests that the areas within both boundaries should be put forward for world heritage. The cabinet agrees. This makes the boundary look a lot better, but still leaves the Hartz Hole, and much of the best tall eucalypt forest, outside the WHA.

It is to take a little while longer before the boundaries of the enlarged WHA outside the tall forests are finalised, a process that takes place in the early days of the Labor-Green Accord in Tasmania. Graham Richardson, always a political advocate for the mining industry, is keen to include the old mine workings at Adamsfield. He wants to demonstrate the compatibility of mining with world heritage, but is careful to exclude any of the prospective Mount Read volcanics in the west. The western boundary largely follows the junction of the Mt Read volcanics with quartzite and leaves out the placer tin deposits between Melaleuca Inlet and Cox Bight. One addition on quartzitic material, south of Macquarie Harbour, is to protect one of the major breeding sites of the endangered orange-bellied parrot. The shape of Christine Milne’s
hand, drawn on the map used in the Labor-Green negotiations, is clearly perceptible.

A nice day on the eastern Central Plateau. Note beany.

Jamie’s involvement at this stage is to advocate the inclusion of the eastern part of the Central Plateau Protected Area around Lake Augusta on the grounds of its high concentration of local alpine endemics and the alpine sand dunes. The Wilderness Society are reluctant to support this addition because the area is degraded by grazing and burning, but it is finally negotiated in, with a commitment from the State government that existing recreational users will not be excluded. This arrangement creates the bizarre situation of part of a world heritage area having a hunting season in which native animals are shot to feed the exotic dog packs that chase them down.

After the decision on the eastern boundary becomes public, some Commonwealth bureaucrats ask Jamie to go on a day trip to Beech Creek with them and Tasmanian forestry people. If the aim of the exercise is to get Jamie to agree that it would be a reasonable thing to push a road through the new world heritage forest near Beech Creek to gain access to logs in the large area of tall forest to its
Conservation Worrier

north, the mission fails. Jamie says that such a road would be totally incompatible with the status of the forest as a world heritage area. A union person, later to be premier of Tasmania, turns red as he shouts at Jamie in response. His spittle splatters Jamie’s face.

Ken Felton, by then a Commissioner of Forests, is in Jamie’s return vehicle. He makes no secret of the fact that he is angry at Jamie’s perceived abandonment of biodiversity for old growth forest and wilderness, as if the Recommended Areas for Protection are part of some deal designed for him. Jamie says that one could only make the conservation gains that were possible at any one time, refusing the implicit trade off.

Ken is right in recognising that Jamie’s major priority in forest conservation is always to reserve the rare and threatened communities and species, communities and species that occur mainly in drier parts of the State than the wilderness forests. The expansion of the WHA boundary did not offer much scope for such conservation. That does not make the expansion without worth. After all, one has to remember that the main uses for the logged old growth trees are for newsprint and cardboard.

Jamie thinks that almost any bit of forest is of more worth standing than being used to those ends. Even the veneer that they try to convince Jamie would be endangered by the expansion of the WHA produces only ephemeral furniture.

The employment argument is not one he is willing to accept, as he see jobs as social constructs not the by-products of the efforts of heroic entrepreneurs. The ‘save the tropical rainforests’ argument seems to him equally absurd. Why would Malaysian timber companies ease off, if Tasmanians cut down more tall eucalypts? There seems to be an insatiable global market for wood products, with tropical woods being used for different purposes than big lumps of eucalypt. The expansion of the WHA is not the end of the
forest debate. Jamie has long suspected that nothing ever will be until the last old growth forest outside, and possibly inside, reserves is felled.

The Wilderness Society and most other conservation groups want a vastly expanded forest reserve system that takes in all wilderness areas and all old growth, with a soupcon of biodiversity, a platypus perhaps. They think they have success in 2013 after negotiations with the industry and unions, but lose their gains in 2014 with the State and national Liberal parties trying to remove a large area of tall forests from the World Heritage Area and revoking the agreed extension of old growth forest reservation elsewhere. The reservation that Jamie had worked so hard to create is now endangered by the political dominance in both Tasmania and Canberra of the representatives of an unholy alliance between big business and the lumpenproletariat.
CHAPTER NINE
THE CORRIDORS OF POWER

Canberra man
The debates over environment that rage fiercely in the seventies and eighties are starting to worry the federal Labor government. While environmental issues are used very effectively to gain and keep office, the Labor Party is losing much of its traditional base, with many unions hostile to any impediment to developments that employ their members. Forests, in particular, are becoming a lose-lose issue. It is time to develop processes to shift the political damage and to keep up good relations with business mates.

Sustaining the Tasmanian forests

The ecologically sustainable development (ESD) process is one solution. ESD is keeping your cake and eating it too; it is planning development as if the future of nature and people matter. The major logical deficiency in the process is that, once non-renewable resources are used, that is the end of them, at least for a very, very long time. The other major logical deficiency is that it is not possible to tell what people will value most in the future, or even reconcile people with dramatically different values in the present.
Much is made of the precautionary principle, in which lack of scientific certainty is not to be taken as an excuse to do anything risky. This appears to give the benefit of the doubt to our descendants and the descendants of the rest of nature. However, as nothing is absolutely certain in science, the literal result of the precautionary principle is to develop nothing. This is obviously not the idea, giving scope to talk about hard and soft precautionary principles, and probabilities rather than absolutes, until the brain turns into mush.

The membership of ESD working groups represents the Commonwealth, the States, big business, the unions and conservation NGOs, with the expertise of the CSIRO tossed in as well. The conservation NGOs refuse to have anything to do with the ‘Forest and Forest Use Working Group’, although participating in all the others, because of recent bad experiences with forest negotiations.

The Commonwealth decides that a couple of scientists, Ian Noble and Jamie, will have to do instead. As Ian is one of those academics who get a long way by conserving their words, Jamie is largely left to represent nature in the vigorous discussions that ensue.

The main storyline of the report seems to be pre-fixed in cement: conservation needs are looked after by reservation and regulation, wood is produced in a physically sustainable manner in the rest of the forest estate, and market forces are left to sort out what happens to this wood.

There is a neoliberal zealot called Bernie on the committee. He makes Jamie almost sympathise with the forest industry people, represented by David Bills, constantly talking into his new brick-like mobile phone. The chair is a CSIRO man, with the appropriate surname ‘Green’. The State forestry person is the cultured head of
the NSW forestry organisation, Hans Drielsma, later to work for Forestry Tasmania. He is very good at sounding very reasonable.

After writing so many reports on forests, Jamie is very good at drafting text and recognising subtle attempts to pervert prose. He attempts to get the specifications for nature conservation as broad as possible, preferring vagueness to the sort of low target precision sought by the industry.

The industry people unsuccessfully try to slide in targets expressed as the proportion of existing forest, a stratagem still attempted because it means that forest destruction improves reservation status. The main focus of industry is in gaining what they called ‘resource security’, the right to compensation from the public purse if the public resource they are making profits from is diverted to another use, such as reservation. This shameless grab for public resources does not manifest itself in the ultimate document, partly thanks to the neoliberal Bernie.

In New Zealand, economic rationalism is effectively used as a weapon to get logging out of natural forests. Unfortunately, although subsidies for logging existed in Australia at the time of the ESD process, much of the industry would have been profitable, even without them.

In the late 1980s Jamie is flavour of the month for national committees. He belongs to the World Wildlife Fund (later World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Scientific Advisory Committee, the Endangered Species Advisory Committee (ESAC) and the Biological Diversity Advisory Committee (BDAC), all of which require frequent travel to the mainland, mostly to Canberra. He is also a Commonwealth representative on the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Advisory Committee (WHAAC), which requires frequent travel in Tasmania.
His popularity is such that Ros Kelly, the Commonwealth Minister for things environmental, asks him to sit next to her at lunch on the maiden voyage of a large red ship, the *Aurora Australis*. This ship has been built by P&O for research in Antarctic waters. Jamie finds it impossible to think of anything to say to Ros, not being used to power dressing. Luckily she speaks to the person on her other side. The ship is rigged up for experimental fishing. The dignatories all assemble at the back to watch the nets go out in the Derwent. The catch is one unfortunate leatherjacket, perhaps presaging the prospective piscine richness of Antarctic waters.

**Softening the pillow for the soon to be deceased**

The work of Jamie’s research group on native grasslands and grassy woodlands is responsible for a shift in his research emphasis from plant communities to threatened species. There are so many lovely species in these vegetation types that appear on the brink of extinction that he becomes motivated to do something to conserve them. Jamie manages to get a bicentennial celebration grant to work on them, largely, he suspects, because he is on the granting committee. Conscriptio to the WWF Scientific Advisory Council and ESAC follows, as he is an early adopter, and the only adopter in Tasmania, which always requires representation on any national committee.

Michael Kennedy, then working for WWF, the public face of which is saving iconic animals with big eyes, persuades Graham Richardson that it would be a good idea to get some advice on saving Australia’s native species, which are lensing out at an alarming rate. The Victorians had already developed a flora and fauna guarantee process. Other States are working on it.

A committee is assembled, with Andy Burbidge from the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) in
Western Australia eventually as chair and Jamie as one of the members. There is a nature-friendly grazier from Burra, who identifies himself as ‘a practitioner’, but most of the members are either State bureaucrats expert in the area, people from environmental non-government organisations (NGOs) or ecologists from universities and the CSIRO.

Dental examination of a species on the road to extinction

Graham Richardson comes to the first meeting, telling the committee that he knows that the main species endangered in Australia are plants. The Committee is able to re-educate him on this subject, pointing out that the most extinctions and the largest proportion of endangered species lie within the Mammalia, creatures like us, except more furry and pouched. Professor Derek Ovington, the Commonwealth bureaucrat with the job of looking after the committee, quietly looks on, possibly wondering what he has got himself into.

When ESAC is born, the budget for threatened species at the Commonwealth level is zero dollars. It gradually increases as the
committee sells the line to bureaucrats and politicians that threatened species are so rare that saving them would have little effect on development compared to acceding to the wilderness and old growth forest agendas, while gaining political greeny points.

The bureaucrats become more and more interested in threatened species, sensing opportunities to empire build on the backs of the doomed. Many of the bureaucrats are also devoted to the cause, as at the time it is considered appropriate to appoint people to bureaucratic positions based on qualifications, knowledge and skills, which are not widely regarded to include a degree in management.

During the most effective years of ESAC the committee meets in a modern glass building in Belconnen. During breaks from formal discussion, Jamie’s pipe smoke drifts from a balcony overlooking the lake.

The head of the Australian Nature Conservation Agency is Peter Bridgewater, who has been an academic ecologist like Jamie before moving to government. Peter is perpetually pixyish, as if freshly waken from A Midsummer Night’s Dream. The politicians laugh at his selection of the name for his agency, which has the same acronym as the Australian National Council for AIDS, but Peter is effective in building up the threatened species program.

Part of the ritual for building up any new program is to produce a strategy. Strategy development in the late decades of the twentieth century has begun to involve requests for public input. ESAC gains a mountain of such input, which a subcommittee takes to Western Australia, to sit down and develop a further version of the collective magnum opus. The comments are loaded in the boot of a hire car.

On the way to the meeting venue, the driver briefly leaves the car, and returns to find it stolen. The absence of comment does not
noticeably inhibit creative activities. A strategy ultimately emerges.

When the government gives endangered species a few million dollars, ESAC asks for proposals to spend it on, then sits around and decides where the money should go, with the CSIRO people pushing hard for most of it to be spent on their rather dangerous genetic engineering, designed to render foxes genetically sterile through communicable disease, with no thought to their future in their native habitats, and others pushing their own barrows.

As the endangered species program grows, the process of funding allocation becomes more and more bureaucratic, and less transparent to the members of ESAC. Soon there is a scientific subcommittee, the job of which is to list species under various classes of threat, a process that strongly affects the success of funding applications. One night in a restaurant at the Australian National University Jamie realizes how dramatically the habitat of ESAC has changed.

Commonwealth committees whose members are assembled together from many parts of the country are traditionally wined and dined at night in mixture with the bureaucrats who administer the programs they advise upon. The conversation at ESAC dinners had always been devoted to threatened species and the politics of the programs for threatened species, with a monumental disinterest by all in personal affairs of the pecuniary kind.

In the ANU restaurant, some of the bureaucrats just want to talk about their house extensions. This tipping point into domesticity and personal indulgence reflects a shift within the Commonwealth Public Service away from substantive knowledge and towards universal management skills.

Substantive knowledge of the area dealt with by a particular section of the bureaucracy becomes a handicap to career advancement,
which is facilitated by frequent shifts between departments and sections of departments. The members of Commonwealth committees barely have the time to get to know a new bureaucrat before they leave for another position.

There eventually comes a dinner at which bureaucrats newly transferred from Treasury or Defence say goodbye to the original members of ESAC, who know too much. As is traditional with advisory committees, no thanks are asked for, or received. This is, indeed, one of the rare occasions when those about to be deprived of their frequent flyer points are made aware of their doom. The doomed go down ungracefully, voicing criticisms of the new regime over the expensive food and wine.

*Threatened Forester kangaroos, waiting for help in a threatened grassland*
ESAC is a convivial committee, with all members fond enough of threatened species, even if the one from a rural background does tend to go on a bit about practitioners. BDAC is the opposite, largely due to the gentleman from the mining industry. In a personal briefing before BDAC attempts the task, Ros Kelly urges the committee to produce something that will be acceptable to industry in general.

The mining man and his colleagues from other industries on the committee desire a document that recognises that compromise is necessary between nature conservation and economic development, arguing that such a trade-off is in the spirit of ecologically sustainable development. Jamie is puzzled. On his ESD committee the basic idea had been to look after nature conservation then trash the remainder, rather than trade-offs, which logically lead to an inexorable loss of conservation values.

Most of the members resist the view of the industry people. The chair allows the representatives of industry to go off to consult and caucus, reinforcing the division, rather than trying to force the committee to find common ground or the industry people to read the ESD documents. The painfully produced strategy, while weak for biodiversity, is not nearly as bad as the collection of aphorisms that constitutes the present one. At least there are one or two targets and an occasional sentence without a weasel word.

The Scientific Advisory Council of WWF is a different experience. WWF can barely scrape up the money to get people together, much less have expensive dinners. The initial lure for a dazzling collection of conservation biologists is the grants program. WWF touts industry for money for projects approved by its SAC, which often includes the projects of its members, although not Jamie, as plants are not as attractive to funders as fluffy things. WWF is run by a small group of well off business people in the same way as the
board of BHP and with the same degree of democracy in their appointment.

The Australian branch almost fails in its early days. It gains a reputation, which it deservedly never quite loses, for conservatism in comparison to other environmental organisations. In an attempt to partly mitigate this conservative reputation, WWF decides to appoint Jamie chair of its SAC.

Policy and action are becoming much more important for WWF than financing research projects. The increasing number of employees can better justify their existence in lobbying for policy and action than in project-managing research work, and, indeed, probably achieve much more for nature conservation in this way.

The SAC is on the path to its present redundancy. Jamie is made redundant earlier than the SAC because of his disinclination to participate in Sydney board meetings and the boring outside-SAC life of the organisation. However, before he is given his marching orders, he chairs many enjoyable meetings with fascinating colleagues in exotic locations, even seeing a numbat in the wilds of the Dryandra State Forest, a highlight of his existence. Numbats are amazingly small and cutely striped as they pop out from under logs.

The SAC Jamie chairs helps WWF develop potentially effective policies that are aimed at protecting threatened species, rather than wilderness and old growth. The most critical of these policies is prevention of land clearance. If a good fairy ever gives Jamie one wish, cessation of land clearance will be it. Since 1972 he had been using the newly available satellite imagery to map the alarming loss of native vegetation in Tasmania, and knows that things are worse elsewhere, especially in Queensland.

The WWF is highly effective in gaining the ears of governing politicians, who like associating with captains of industry and
pandas, whatever their party. WWF has a special affinity with the Liberal Party, unlike most environmental NGOs.

It is therefore not surprising that Jamie is called to have a chat with Robert Hill, the Liberal Minister responsible for environment, after the Keating government is voted out. Jamie emphasizes the extreme importance of controlling land clearance and protecting species, rather than disappearing down the forest vortex.

Amazingly, Robert is successful in dramatically slowing vegetation loss, helped by rather dubiously counting clearing control as carbon credits under the Kyoto Agreement that his government never signs.

Robert micromanages grant programs and the development of the moderately effective *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*. Jamie resists being on any of the committees that recommend grants at this time, as he knows that their
recommendations are ignored, while having a high opinion of the achievements of the Minister who ignores them.

The State of Tasmania is slow to establish legislative protection for threatened species. In the late 1990s Jamie is asked to be a member of the first Scientific Advisory Committee set up under the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1996*. The act is not a great one, with the relevant Minister, David Llewellyn, setting up an advisory structure for its formulation that is guaranteed to produce inefficacy. There is nothing like having a substantial majority on a design committee of the people who could be most affected by a threatened species act. They produce gems like a 20 day time period in which the Minister has to compensate if he prevents someone clearing critical habitat of a threatened species, the provision that ignorance is a defence against being nabbed for taking a threatened species, and the arrangement that the Minister is the ultimate decision-maker under the act.

The invitation comes at a time when Canberra has ceased to be Jamie’s second home, so he has the time for it. The people on the committee are to be people he knows and likes, plus a few he wants to get to know. The chair is his old mate Mick Brown. The meetings are highly entertaining. The SAC refuses to meet in the toxic Lands Department Building with its airless and windowless rooms, so mostly ends up in a wooden hut in the Botanical Gardens. The committee also insists on Tim Tams for morning and afternoon tea, with much debate on the proportions of the various types, some of which appear to be threatened. The members have lovely science-talk about the criteria for different levels of threat and the status of individual species.

It is all too good to be true. The first intrusion into the cloistered world of the SAC is the blue fin tuna, nominated for listing by Michael Kennedy, the very person who got Jamie on the first federal endangered species committee. The poor old blue fin tuna
not only has to cope with gross overfishing in its breeding grounds by the Japanese, but also bloodthirsty Tasmanians with giant rods on the back of boats who set off to catch them as they swim past Eaglehawk Neck, not to mention South Australians, who net small ones to grow them on for the table. This is a political nightmare for the SAC. There is no way that stopping people catching blue fin tuna in Tasmanian waters is going to result in any recovery of the species, and there is every way that protecting the species in Tasmania would lead to a massive public outcry, with politicians baying from all quarters except the Green one. The committee rationalises itself out of recommending listing.

The wise creators of the Tasmanian act not only make it easy to avoid, but also recommend difficult and time-consuming bureaucratic processes, presumably to prevent any bureaucrats actually doing something that might help threatened species. Peter Brown, a bird ecologist and chrysanthemum-lover who is most of the threatened species bureaucracy, is therefore quite pleased when responsibility for threatened species in forests is transferred to the forest bureaucracy, with, of course, the Minister having the last say. The members of the SAC do not possess the forestry phobia that grips most environmentalists in Tasmania, so are not overly concerned. At least there are some resources to do something in forestry and their scientists are reputable. The sentiments of the SAC are not shared by the local conservation groups who begin to attack Mick Brown as the chair, because he works for forestry, and therefore is assumed to have a conflict of interest.

If he does have such a conflict, it makes him go the other way, but he feels that it is best to resign from the chair. Jamie is asked to replace him.

Because of his foolish tendency to speak what he constitutes to be truth to power, Jamie eventually gets on the wrong side of the Minister, who begins to reject recommendations for listing. Up
until then, David and Jamie have a good relationship, consisting of Jamie politely listening at a Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Advisory Committee (WHAAC) dinner while Simon Cubit, the traditional recreationist on the committee, extracts details from David of the snaring techniques he learned when young in the northeast of the State, and currently applies to eliminating rats from his suburban roof cavity.

The act is trawled for the clause that said that no member of the SAC could serve more than five years continuously - another triumph for the drafting committee. Jamie had been on it longer. Jamie feels relief more than chagrin. It is hard work being an advisor to a Tasmanian government of any persuasion if you want to look after the natural values of the State.

When Jamie is inveigled against his will on to a committee to develop a nature conservation strategy for Tasmania, the Minister (David again) addresses the first meeting. He tells the committee not to expect any money or resources from the strategy, which, indeed, is comprehensively shelved once complete, at the same time as the nature conservation bureaucracy is reduced yet further.

The only Tasmanian government committee through which Jamie ends up improving nature conservation in Tasmania is the WHAAC, and that committee is a joint effort with the Commonwealth.
CHAPTER TEN
WORKING FOR THE WHA

WHAAcing

When WHAAC is set up in the mid-1980s to provide advice on the management of the World Heritage Area (WHA), the Commonwealth and State each appoint half the members with the chair jointly appointed. As the committee arises from the aftermath of the saving of the Franklin River from damming by Commonwealth fiat, the State Government, led by Robin Gray, makes sure that all its members are dedicated development proponents. The Commonwealth Government does the reverse, appointing many of those who had an important role in fighting for the WHA and conservation in general, including Dick Jones, who is appointed as an ecologist, but who is also the most prominent political candidate of Green persuasion in the State and the Director of the radical Centre for Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania. The politicians and bureaucrats sigh and sit back, confident that they will not have to cope with any advice from this lot, who would spend meeting time tearing each other’s throats out, and would eventually self-destruct.

The politicians and bureaucrats are disappointed when, at the suggestion of Dick and with the support of all members, the committee decides that it would take its job of providing advice on management seriously and not engage in debates on WHA boundaries or on activities that were not allowed within the boundaries, like logging and dam-building. With this one decision, the diversity of the committee becomes its strength, rather than a fatal weakness.

Dick was to attend no more meetings, dying in 1987, after falling from a ladder. The Commonwealth chooses Jamie as his
replacement. He has recently been appointed Head of the Department of Geography, so is seriously considering buying his first suit and tie. The offer of a position on WHAAC finally impels him to engage in its purchase, a single-breasted navy blue pin stripe with red tie, mimicking the businessmen he sees in airports on the way to and from Canberra. Jamie labours under a misconception, as WHAAC turns out to be the last place that one would wear a suit. Never mind, Jamie is able to use it as protective coloration in other circumstances, once he gets the idea that Blundstone elastic-sided boots are not acceptable as footwear.

The chair of WHAAC, Doug Doyle, had cleaned up the Tasmanian coast and made it accessible when head of the Lands Department, as well as establishing protection and management of places inland, like the Central Plateau. Part of one of the reserves he had created, and ensured was well-managed, was in the WHA, the Central Plateau Protected Area. Jamie’s first meeting of the committee is based nearby, at the Bronte Park Holiday Village.

Doug has a probiscus that makes you suspect that theories about noses being secondary sexual characteristics are on the money. Having thus gained your unwilling attention, he is an outstanding chair, making sure that everyone voices an opinion on issues, facilitating discussion and insisting on the writing and editing of any recommendations during the meeting.

The convention arises that anything that is agreed upon by all but one or two of the committee will become its recommendation, but with the dissenting view expressed. A background paragraph gives the context and reasons for recommendations. Recommendations agreed to by all of the committee have enormous power because of the diverse membership. The members include dedicated conservationists, dedicated developers, tourism entrepreneurs, archaeologists, people in their twenties and people in their nineties.
The meetings run over three to four days and include field trips during which there is much vigorous informal discussion. There is carousing at night, during which discussion becomes even less formal again, even Dionysian. These interactions help to instil respect and acceptance for those with opposite philosophies and views, although not working with 90 years olds like Roger Smith from Zeehan, who need their sleep.

![Image of WHAAC meeting with Doug Doyle and Rhys Jones](image)


WHAAC begins to make unanimous recommendations that alarm the bureaucrats and politicians. John Luscombe, a businessman appointed by the State who is familiar with parks in the USA, persuades the committee of the imminent need for a shuttle bus service to Dove Lake at Cradle Mountain.
He also emphasises the undesirability of commercial infrastructure development within park boundaries. Jamie does not need any convincing of the latter, having been kicked off the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council in the 1970s for voting against a recommendation to approve commercial huts along the Overland Track. Unfortunately, some powerful bureaucrats and politicians see the future of the WHA to be subdivision for Wilderness Lodges, and have a program to identify suitable sites for such development. The shuttle bus recommendation is regarded as absurdly unTasmanian, when there is a perfectly good road for cars and a large white gravel parking area right next to the lake. There are rumblings that WHAAC should only look at matters referred to it for consideration, a proposal ultimately rejected by the Commonwealth.

The meetings of WHAAC in Strahan on the West Coast are the most educational. When the dam is stopped, the tourist boats, with names akin to ‘Wilderness Piercer’ are given free rein. They race each other from Strahan up the Gordon River, destroying its famed reflections of rainforest and its less famed levee banks. Huon pines splash into the water as the shore rapidly retreats. Slips striate the slopes. Accused of scenery mining, the boat operators blame the Hydro. The government scientists are forced to prove the guilt of the boat wakes before the government is prepared to stop the damage.

On WHAAC’s first journey in one of these boats, the members settle back in their seats to enjoy the interpretation of the world heritage wonders broadcast through its public address system. A tirade of abuse of the Parks and Wildlife Service entertains the customers, most of whom are green-inclined, attracted to the trip by the publicity associated with the blockade.

On the same trip the committee meets with the local council. The council has been given a lot of money for a sewerage scheme. The
committee finds out that they had managed to sewer West Strahan, where most of the councillors lived, but had run out of money before sewer ing East Strahan, where most of the tourism facilities are located and would be located. They seem vaguely hostile to the whole idea of tourists, although the future of their town obviously depends on extracting money from them. After the meeting, John Luscombe gets the tourism people in Strahan to get their act together, and Strahan is gradually transformed into a town for tourists wanting to visit the WHA wild rivers, instead of an obstacle to be negotiated if one wanted to see the WHA wild rivers.

Dinners in Strahan reflect this gradual change. In the early days there are counter teas in Hamers Hotel. Happy Hamers is a typical West Coast hotel. Rhys Jones, the ebullient archaeologist on the committee, is almost beaten up there when researching the south west in company with Darryl West, his Tasmanian Aboriginal assistant. He survives because, with quick Welsh wit, he persuades his assailants that he is into mineral exploration, which he is, in a sense, searching for Pleistocene stone tools.

There is a long room in Hamers where some of the councillors have their own stools at the public bar. Then there is the Ladies Lounge, where effete tourists and others have a lower probability of being beaten up than if they sit in a councillor’s seat.
An English tourist on the adjacent table in the Ladies Lounge approaches the barman: ‘I say, my good man, do you have a nice bottle of red wine.’ The barman looks confused at anyone not ordering a beer, but gamely recovers, disappearing into an alcove and emerging with a dust-covered bottle. A smile breaks out on the Englishman’s face: ‘Thank you my dear man, can you remove the cork for me.’ A panicked look slightly deranges the visage of the barman who scrabbles around behind the bar for a few seconds. He answers: ‘No’.

A more weighty WHAAC considering the site for a new visitor’s centre in the noughties. Bryce McNair, the chair, is in front of Jamie, who is waving his hat.

Helen Gee, who is related to one of the councillors sitting on a stool at the public bar, leaps up, says something to him, then rushes out of the door of the pub. A few minutes later, she returns with a corkscrew, having burst into the surprised councillor’s wife’s kitchen to borrow the implement. She hands the corkscrew to the
Conservation Worrier

Englishman, who, in turn, delivers it to the barman, who examines it in a puzzled manner, and says ‘Do it yourself’. The members of the committee do not dare laugh, at least not then.

A few years later WHAAC has another trip up the Gordon. Thanks to a lot of people, including those in WHAAC, the commentary is better and further damage to the banks prevented. In compensation for not going so far up the river, tourists have a nature walk in Huon pine forest and stop at Sarah Island, where there are ruins of a convict prison.

The evening meal is to be at Strahan Manor, an upmarket dining and accommodation place characteristic of the new sophisticated Strahan that arose from John Luscombe’s tutelage. Unfortunately, the committee is less sophisticated than the new Strahan, a delay in the delivery of the sparse food in cuisine minceur style leading to widespread fine-wine-induced inebriation. Rhys Jones develops the theme of the evening: ‘Priscilla of the Gordon’. It is his best performance since his imitation of Kevin Kiernan wiggling his way through a cave at Mole Creek, unfortunately cut short by expulsion, much to the relief of the other paying customers.

A small man with a beer belly which wobbles when he quivers with excitement, Rhys is prone to burst out in enthusiastic and entertaining lecturing on subjects such as the Darwin Crater and the Burra Charter. He is also prone to miss early morning meetings to sleep off some terrible hangovers.

Rhys is famed internationally for his fire stick farming hypothesis as well as later work using thermoluminescence dating that indicates that people arrived in Australia more than 40,000 years ago, the limit of carbon dating.

In his PhD on archaeological deposits at Rocky Cape in Tasmania Rhys finds a sudden cessation in the use of finned fish. He is featured in a film that suggests that Tasmanian Aborigines were in
a state of cultural decline, resulting in their ultimate demise when Europeans invaded. The film does not endear him to the descendants of these supposedly extinct Tasmanian Aborigines, who, in the latter years of the twentieth century are asserting their cultural identity and are proud of their recent ancestors, who heroically resisted the British invasion in the Black War of the 1820s.

There is an Aboriginal position on the committee, but few people in it turn up to the meetings for several years between Patsy Cameron and Greg Lehman. When they do, they snipe at Rhys, who snipes back that he is the only one in the room who speaks an Aboriginal language, which is true but somewhat beside the point. Rhys is replaced by a local archaeologist, Anne McConnell. After he leaves WHAAC Jamie sees him occasionally when staying in his favourite accommodation in Canberra, University House, which has a bar and beer garden frequented by staff from the Australian National University. Rhys dies, middle-aged, of stomach cancer, after returning to Wales.

**Interacting with Indigenes**

Aunty Patsy Cameron (‘Aunty’ being an Aboriginal honorific) is a positive and kind person with a passion for her people. She is effective in moderating the attitudes of some of the more racist members of the committee.

Greg Lehman is equally passionate, but not enmeshed to the same degree in the society that derives from the eastern Bass Strait islands, having come late to the realisation of his Aboriginal ancestry. In one meeting he describes a journey of his direct Aboriginal ancestor from exile in Oyster Cove along the South Coast, living off the land and sea. Jamie is deeply affected by this account. Jamie’s great grandparent, who brought out his piper from
Scotland to Buninyong, had not come from a culture that lasted 40,000 years (Scotland was under ice for much of this time), although he had come from a similar landscape to that traversed by Greg’s ancestor; rainy, cool, glaciated and infertile.

The only Aborigines Jamie sees when a child and adolescent in Melbourne are a small group of highly athletic children from the Top End, who somehow visit Tucker Road Primary School for a week or two and a deaf adolescent, one of the stolen generation, adopted by an upper middle class family he knows. He is taught nothing of Aboriginal history and culture in either school or university, and certainly not about the way that the invading Europeans killed, raped and stole their way across the continent.

Inasmuch as Jamie knows anything of Aborigines, he has the impression of a people destroyed by unfamiliar diseases who had invented boomerangs. Jamie knows that some Aborigines still survive in primitive settlements in the most unpleasant parts of Australia, but has no idea that they survive in the 1970s in Victoria and Tasmania, especially Tasmania, where, he has been informed, Truganini was the last of her race.

As Jamie learns more on the subject by experience and wide reading, he realizes that there are people who have emerged from a history of European evil identifying themselves as Aborigines, and that they want their country back.

By the early 1990s he had interacted with quite a few Aboriginal people, both from Tasmania and northern Australia. The Tiwi people on Bathurst Island definitely do not possess upper middle class green values. To start off with, they ration the amount of alcohol one can buy at the Tiwi Club, play Australian-rules football with bare feet and never say please or thank you. A Tiwi bloke who works on the mainland complains to Jamie that he never gets to use
any of his earnings for himself, such is the network of tightly defined obligations and responsibilities within his community.

Animal welfare does not seem to be high on the list of these responsibilities, with turtles being cooked live in their carapaces. Nature conservation is not a priority either. This is not surprising in a society which does not perceive people as separate from nature. The Tiwis are happy to have a substantial part of their island planted to *Pinus pinaster* and are not in the least concerned that this activity is wiping out most of the area of a particular vegetation type. Tribal Aboriginal people do not have the common middle class green aversion to introduced animals in the bush. Ferals, such as cats, are incorporated in a web of obligations and responsibilities, which extends well beyond people to the rest of country, and are gratefully eaten by those who are customarily allowed to do so. Aboriginal people on Cape York value ‘killer herds’ of cattle and have developed different ways of burning to suit their presence. A similar high degree of adaptability was evident in Tasmania in the early nineteenth century, with the Aboriginal people immediately seeing the advantages in establishing commensal relationships with dogs.

Tasmanian Aborigines emerge from obscurity in the 1970s and 1980s. The Mabo decision does not directly enable Tasmanian Aborigines to regain their country, as they fail some of the continuity tests, but there is sympathy for their cause that ultimately expresses itself in land being given, or returned, to the Aboriginal community.

Much of this land is in places, such as the Furneaux Group of islands, where there were no people when Europeans invaded, but where Aboriginal women lived with sealers. Their children produced the core population of contemporary Aboriginal society.
The land is conservation land or vacant crown land. The cave sites in the WHA are among the first areas to be returned. Land on Cape Barren and Clarke Islands that has high nature conservation values, and that Jamie hopes to get into secure reserves, is also transferred to Aboriginal ownership.

In the 1980s Jamie believes that the Australia of the late twentieth century needs to make substantial redress to the descendants of the gathering and hunting people who looked after the continent for at least 40,000 years, because of the rawness and recentness of the savage European takeover. However, he perceives the return or gifting of conservation land to be a poor option. He favours rent combined with the return of some of the more economically valuable developed land.

Jamie thinks that contemporary Aborigines could not be expected to return to the Stone Age culture in the bush which helped create the present nature, and can see the possibilities for development, or ultimate sale of the land for development, nullifying its value for nature conservation.

He knows that a lot of the conservation land is so poor in food resources that humans had largely avoided it anyway. This certainly seems to have been the case in the interior of the WHA over the last ten thousand years, although wallaby hunters had frequented the area during the Last Glacial when the dolomite valley floors were rich grasslands. He also thinks that prior possession is a pretty lousy argument with our highly invasive species, noted for its successive waves of displacement of peoples and the rest of nature in all parts of the world, including prehistoric Australia. How far back did you go – to Lake Turkana?

Now he thinks that, on average, Aboriginal people are likely to do a better job conserving nature than State and Commonwealth governments, not that any of them are all that great at it. Probably
the best option is co-management, with each group keeping the other on its toes

**Traditional practitioners**

Some of the main management problems of the WHA are caused by the inconvenient attachment of local people around its boundaries to practices within it that are abhorrent to latte sipping wilderness lovers like Jamie. Some of these practices, in some situations, damage world heritage and other conservation values, as well as the sensibilities of the refined.

The West Coast blokes are used to retreating by boat to small huts where they drink beer and peruse ‘stick magazines’ at night and shoot and hook wildlife during the day. Reindeer Lodge is the only dwelling left in the once busy port of Pillinger.

The lodge sits next to an old wharf, the past destination of ore trains from Crotty. Rainforest trees and eucalypts reclaim the town. Trees grow up through the middle of rusting railway jinkers.

*The naturally unflushing alternative on the old docks at Pillinger*
Next to a native pepper growing in the rotting wood of the edge of the wharf, there is the toilet facility, the traditional small room, but this time with refreshing air from below. Fish nibble faeces and toilet paper in the two metres of water below the seat.

After some argy-bargy, a duck hunting zone is put in the management plan and the locals are allowed to continue their use of the huts, including Reindeer Lodge. Parks even build a composting toilet for the duck hunters. They prefer the naturally unflushing alternative.

The West Coasters are pissed off that PWS close, or plan to close, tracks that they frequent in their off-road vehicles. The Raglan Range had been a favourite place to destroy spines and springs in the cause of recreation, with its maze of old logging roads. At the behest of Bob Brown, this logged, burned and well-tracked disaster area is put within the WHA. Before it was part of the WHA, Jamie drives up the road once, but the second time has to hairily back his four wheel drive down from halfway up.

The roads are rehabilitated and blocked off, much to the chagrin of the locals, who are determined to fight hard to maintain their right to dislocate their spines.

The Hydro had put in a road to Mt McCall, above a gauging station they installed on the Franklin River, preparatory to its damming. This road destroys a lot of wilderness, being visible as a white scar as far away as Frenchmans Cap. The WHA management plan says that it should be closed and rehabilitated. The West Coast locals, who use the road for four wheel driving, launch a campaign of resistance, supported by a double-counting economic analysis from a student of Bob Cotgrove, and one of the Franklin River rafting companies, which uses the road for a short trip. WHAAC inspects the road, but cannot come to a consensus on its future. The road is still there and still used by four wheel drives.
Simon says clip-clop

Horse-riding is the next major conflict with local people, by this time ably represented on WHAAC by Simon Cubit, who tells Jamie that he sees himself as the Bob Brown of traditional practice. Indeed, on his particular issues, he is as passionate, persistent and obdurate as Bob is on his. One of these issues is horse-riding, banned within the WHA. Simon does not shut up on the subject of horses. Eventually, the other members of the committee are so exasperated with the raising of matters equine, that, when he starts once again, they spontaneously break out in synchronised ‘clip-clop’ noises.

Simon also argues for the valuing and conservation of the heritage of the local people – huts, stock yards and fences. He wants it to be living heritage, with local people continuing to be involved in its maintenance and use.

There are fights over the reconstruction of the Lake Nameless Hut, with the heritage people in the Parks and Wildlife Service seeing the reconstruction by local people as working against the preservation of their own history. Simon’s point is that this was well and good, but that all uses evolve, so the local community should be allowed to adapt the buildings to present uses. After all, it did not seem possible to reinstate transhumant sheep grazing or trapping, the activities for which the huts were built.

Because Jamie is passionate about the rest of nature, rather than *Homo sapiens*, it takes him a while to sympathise with Simon. He would rather have had the huts compost into nature than stand there reminding him of the damage that graziers did to the alpine vegetation, and horses were big heavy units with small hooves that could damage the remaining greenery and had poo full of viable weed seed. It did not help that Simon becomes the public relations officer for the Forestry Commission for a while and tends to side
with developers on the committee on issues to do with tourism. Nevertheless, Simon’s nagging impels Jamie to work with his honours student, Rebecca Cannell and Parks staff, Jennie Whinam and Mike Comfort, to set up experiments to determine how much damage horse-riding actually does.

To test for weed invasion potential, they set up fences that kept out the wallabies, wombats and rabbits that frequent the plateau and deposit horse poo randomly inside and outside. Simon gets some mountain cattlemen to bring their horses up to the alpine zone and ride them back and forth in grassland, alpine heath and vegetation dominated by cushion plants.

Jamie is impressed by the way that the horses take a chomp out of the alpine vegetation, roll it around in their mouths and spit out the bits they do not want. The researchers are collectively not impressed by the giant hoof marks in cushion plants, aborting the run after three passes, but there does not seem to be much in the way of immediate damage after thirty passes in the grassland and heath.

It turns out that Simon is right. Horse riding on the Central Plateau is unlikely to be a conservation problem. Thirty horses in a row create imperceptible damage in the dry grassy vegetation they prefer for passage, and even the cushion plants recover over the next year. The worst thing that happens is ongoing dieback of branches of prostrate shrubs damaged by hooves. A lot of seedlings emerge from the poo inside the fences, to be patiently identified and weeded. Outside the fences, wallabies, wombats and rabbits comprehensively demolish all weeds, with not a single one surviving to be measured.

**Playing TAG**

In arguing for horse riding, Simon constantly points out the damage to the WHA being done by bushwalkers, much to the annoyance of
Helen Thyne, their representative. He is undoubtedly correct. There is a large body of information and data that shows tracks enlarging and tracks where there had been no tracks just recently. The beautiful mountains of the WHA are becoming undecorated by white streaks.

WHAAC inspects old track. Helen Thyne extends helping arm to Bob Tyson

Parks produces a track management strategy with the aim of solving the problem with a combination of rationing of access and repair. The walking clubs have other ideas. They find any form of rationing of access totally unacceptable. They convince the State minister, David again, that he should support them, thereby preventing the implementation of the strategy.

Jamie thinks that a combination of negotiation and research might solve the problem and helps convince WHAAC to advise the establishment of a Track Assessment Group (TAG) to resolve the issue - a bad mistake.
TAG is very Tasmanian. One of the bushwalker club reps is the ex-husband of Helen Thyne, who is also on TAG as a WHAAC member. The bushwalker joined Jamie in voting against commercial huts on the Overland Track when they were both on the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Committee in the 1970s. His partial deafness and the prolixity of another bushwalker representative are valuable negotiating aids.

Tim O’Loughlin, a planner from Parks, who devised the minimal impact bushwalking campaign, is the organiser of the weekend retreats that take place in progressively less salubrious venues in the middle of the State. The walking club bushwalkers hate the track management people in Parks, who clearly reciprocate the feeling. There is no rapprochement during the long course of discussions.

Jamie is fooled by the easy resolution of the horse-riding issue. The research that Jennie Whinam does on the impact of walkers on the alpine vegetation of the mountains of the south west does not produce a comfortable outcome. One hundred walkers a year are enough to create on-going irreversible damage that requires expensive work to stabilise. At least 500 walkers are thought to be using the Western Arthur Range each year, although the stats are not very good.

The outcomes of the highly amusing research that Kerry Bridle, Julie von Platen and Jamie undertake on the ecological and health effects of disposal of poo, wee and tampons in the wild are less disturbing.

They find that poo preserves remarkably well in the soil in acid, wet and cold places like the Western Arthurs, effectively forming coproliths. Luckily, the acid soils seem to kill off most of the bacteria, the digging does not kill the vegetation and neither wee nor poo raise fertility enough to cause weed invasion.
The bushwalking clubs are not convinced of a need for rationing access by experiments, or anything. A particularly obdurate remote country bushwalker on TAG blames wombats for a bad bit of track at the back of the Denison Range. He may have been right, but wombats are not to blame for the messy tracks and camp sites in the Western Arthurs and elsewhere. The bushwalking club people say that if there is damage, then it should be repaired by Parks. They do not see any justification for paying the hundreds of dollars per walker it would cost to do work on tracks in remote areas, saying that it was mainlanders and people who no longer walk who had caused the problems, not their members.

They use every negotiating trick in the book, most annoyingly insisting on repeatedly returning to issues on which they had previously agreed. Their aim is to wear down Parks and the two representatives from WHAAC who do not share their point of view, while approaching a resolution that creates further delays. They succeed. TAG adopts the limits of acceptable change process. If the limits of acceptable change, to be determined by another committee, were to be exceeded, then controls would ensue.

The Western Arthurs are to be the test area. Jamie cannot face any more time with the bushwalkers, so does not participate in this
process, which ends in the disarray desired by the clubs, with a solution too expensive to adopt and an unresolved conflict over what is acceptable and how it should be measured.

Partly thanks to back room work by Simon, the tourism card eventually trumps the walking club card, with rationing, a computer booking system and fees being adopted for the Overland Track during the high use part of the year. The Western Arthurs are still being trashed by walkers, and the monitoring undertaken by Grant Dixon from Parks indicates that unconstructed tracks there and elsewhere continue to deteriorate, despite a drop off in use resulting from changes in recreational preferences. However, some heavily-used areas that used to have catastrophically deteriorating and spreading tracks or expanding camp grounds, such as Cradle Mountain, Hartz Mountains and the Walls of Jerusalem, markedly improve after the construction of hardened tracks and tent platforms by Parks. The trouble with approaching resolution through TAG was that Parks would not discriminate between the locals and others; otherwise they could have just given an exemption to members of local bushwalking clubs on the grounds of their track work and developed a booking system for the majority of the walkers, most of whom support some degree of access limitation and user pays to keep the beauty of the WHA intact.
The internal conflict Jamie has on WHAAC and TAG in relation to these people issues is that he hates control and regimentation as much as the traditional recreationalists and members of the bushwalking clubs. He does not want to have to make a booking to go for a walk, or get a permit to note down the plant species on the top of a mountain. He certainly does not want to pay for the privilege of being regimented. Although only in Tasmania for a few decades, Jamie has the same strong emotional attachment to landscape that shines from bushwalker, horse rider and hut builder alike. They love the place, and think that they are looking after it even as they destroy aspects of it that Jamie values. The rub is that the only way Jamie can see of keeping the rest of nature intact in a growthist society is to get it set aside as a holy place, managed by bureaucratic high priests and blessed by science. This approach sort of works, at the cost of partially displacing local people from their corner shrines in acts of place piracy, excused in public discourse by the prosperity that is being visited on Tasmania by tourists.

Money changers in the temple

In the early 1970s Jamie finishes the fieldwork for his PhD thesis on blue gums, but misses being in the bush so much that he pretends to himself that he needs to go to East Gippsland and New South Wales yet again. Lou Costello, one of his best friends at school, accompanies him with Rose who will be, in a few years, the widowed mother of his children.

Driving on a straight stretch of road in the Monaro Jamie has the feeling he is watching colour television, a travel show perhaps, isolated from the soul of the landscape. His other memory of that trip is more intimate, a metre long goanna fleeing from ransacking his tent and running straight up a dead tree. He identifies these experiences as travel, rather than tourism, which he associates with
resorts, lookouts and attractions with crowds of camera-wielding middle-aged people in bright shirts and shorts. The Tasmanian tourism bodies of the twenty-first century do not make such a callow and ageist distinction. Jamie’s past self would have been one segment of the market, the bright shirts another.

When growthists are denied one form of economic development, they look for another, being unable to conceive that anything can be just left to itself, unlike those who devise the Zen number plate slogan: ‘Victoria - the place to be’. The WHA is expanded several times. Each time conservationists argue for the tourism-based economic benefits of its expansion. Politicians interpret this benefit to mean that ex-loggers will be serving Pink Ladies and Harvey Woolbangers to rich tourists reclining on cane couches on lodge verandahs overlooking, or in, the wilderness. The early WHAAC conclusion that such development should be placed outside the WHA is never embraced in the ‘whole of government’ approach to tourism.

Lake St Clair has always been the epicentre of prospective development within the WHA, because construction of accommodation there is not quite as economically stupid as in some other proposed locations and there is not as strong an attachment to the place by locals as with Cradle Valley.

On Jamie’s first WHAAC meeting the members are taken to the gloomy Lake St Clair camp ground to listen to development proposals from the concessionaire of the time. It was the first of many visits, with the face of the concessionaire Janus-like.

One of the distinctions of Lake St Clair is that it has been given the prize for being the most climatically-challenged place in Australia. From Jamie’s perspective Marble Bar should have won, but Lake St Clair is admittedly not a place for frolicking under sun umbrellas. Bring your vitamin D tablets and brolly if planning to
tarry long there. A lack of vitamin D may account for the difficult nature of many of the people who have run the camp ground, tourist boat and other facilities under concession to Parks. However, Jamie’s preferred theory is that it is the spirit of the place seeping into their souls.

In the 1970s, NPWAC is proudly taken to see the government-built hotel that replaced a demolished small establishment in Derwent Bridge, the town immediately outside the WHA near Lake St Clair. The bar and dining room are like a cathedral with the altar being the bar next to the largest fire place in Christendom, designed to repel the cold seeping through overlarge windows, but never quite achieving its goal. Jamie wears his great coat and gloves right through the one meeting of WHAAC that is held there.

The government sells the hotel on to free enterprise at a massive loss. Free enterprise also finds it difficult to make money out of it because there are few locals and few hotel rooms and expansion is restricted by a lack of sewerage facilities.

In the end, one of a sequence of owners places ugly container accommodation next to his cathedral, and services both with a small private sewerage system. Meanwhile a large public sewerage plant is built at Lake St Clair.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the service station/kiosk at Derwent Bridge is a tourist attraction in itself. It is the only place to buy petrol on the highway between Ouse and Queenstown, an extremely long stretch by Tasmanian standards. Visiting motorists are greeted by a sign outside the toilets: ‘Strictly Customers Only’. As they approach the kiosk a large sign exhorts them to ‘Leave Your Packs Outside’, obviously a response to those pesky bushwalkers who are so starved for junk food after emerging from the Overland Track that they forget the beasts on their backs. On the left hand side of the door is a stand with newspapers, usually yesterday’s because of
the remoteness of the area. Should a customer’s eyes stray towards the headlines, a large sign tells them: ‘If You Want to Read, Buy’. The acme of the experience is the service at the counter, the opposite of the ‘have a nice day’ approach and much more sincere.

In the mid-1980s Jamie guides a group of geographers who had been attending the International Geographical Congress in Sydney on a post conference excursion. On the last night there is a stay in Queenstown. One of people on the excursion has booked a car that he is going to pick up to catch a flight from Launceston. He has arranged to pick it up early. The Queenstown agent of the hire car company does not let him have it until normal opening hours, thereby imperilling his flight booking, and is very rude to him when he presses the matter.

As the bus lurches along the winding Lyell Highway Jamie tells strange tales and true about the legendary inhospitality of central and western Tasmania, informing the geographers that they have a special treat in store at Derwent Bridge.

The bus pulls in at the service station. A few brave souls accompany Jamie into the cafeteria. A tall woman with a long face looks around at the group from behind the counter, notes the large bus outside, rises impressively to her full height, and says ‘We don’t do buses’.

A company devoted to environmentally sound projects, even employing their own ecologist, purchases the Lake St Clair concession. Jamie is rung up at work by one of the employees of the company, who proudly informs him that, as well as the Lake St Clair expansion project, they sell solar systems and are in the process of developing a coastal ecovillage on Bruny Island. Jamie tells him that he thinks that their coastal and inland developments are environmentally undesirable, so is not invited to participate in
the long term vegetation monitoring project they set up on Mount Rufus for the brief period in which they possess the concession.

He does, however, have the privilege, with the rest of WHAAC, of being wined and dined on a commodious vessel they had introduced to the lake with the intention of providing a fine visitor experience. As the boat drifts across atypically glassy waters under a gruel sky, the various parts of the vessel, which closely resembles a dilapidated shed on a raft, seem to move independently in response to the tiny waves. Zephyr winds push the boat off course. Luckily, the boat makes it back to shore before more typical wave and weather conditions prevail. The Committee is asked what they think of the experience. The usually vociferous members are stunned into silence, the chair mumbling a graceless thanks for lunch.

The Lake St Clair campground is the scene of ministerial transubstantiation of a clause in the WHA Management Plan which states that a maximum number of three new accommodation units were allowed. The Ministerial Council define three units as one, because they are to be joined by walkways, thereby allowing the construction of nine units. They also develop amnesia on the plan prescription to maintain a range of accommodation types, allowing the developer to destroy vertical board huts to fit in the luxury units.

The visitor centre that is built at Lake St Clair with world heritage money is even bigger and glassier than the Derwent Bridge Hotel, most of it being the commercial space, full of fluffy souvenirs and coffee machines. WHAAC, led by Helen Thyne and Jamie, fight a rearguard action to keep some of the atmosphere of the Lake St Clair they know and are slightly ambivalent about.

Helen’s focus is on the picnic shed and the remaining old huts in the campground. Jamie’s is on the marsupial lawn. The committee does better on the buildings than the lawns. Much of the lawn is
surrounded by an electric fence, designed to keep out the marsupials, and native trees and shrubs are planted. However, the picnic shed remains in discordant juxtaposition to the monument to architectural endeavour that is the visitor centre.

In the Lake St Clair campground

One of the huts is kept in the camp ground, as a museum to bygone days, along with the beautifully presented Fergy’s stump, the centrepiece of an earlier camp on the site.

Wilderness lodging

Even with three buildings equalling one and a monumental visitor centre, there is a lot of unused capacity in the sewage plant. This is noted by the whole of government committee responsible for selecting tourism sites to tout to all comers. Lake St Clair is a natural lake raised a few meters to be a hydro impoundment. The Hydro build a neoclassical pumphouse near their dam and a little village next to the pumphouse. These are now surplus to the requirements of the electricity generating system and are in the WHA – an obvious place for a tourist lodge. The State Government puts out a call for proposals to develop the site.
When WHAAC meets the mainland men who gain the rights to the site, the committee is most impressed by their immaculate dark suits, crisp white shirts, pressed ties and shining shoes; not to mention their imaginations. Buckhorst Lodge is such an appropriate name for accommodation that is to cost thousands a night for the trout fishermen who will rush from all over the world to catch the helicopter from Hobart Airport to Pumphouse Point, then helicopter out with their rods and flies to the Western Lakes.

The whole of government committee is probably shocked when Buckhorst Lodge fails to eventuate. The WHAAC members are not. There is a certain lack of attention to detail that contrasts with the shininess of the shoes – like Pumphouse Point being shown with the wrong zoning for development in the Management Plan, which is the legal document, and helicopters being problematical anywhere in the WHA. Neither of these are fatal flaws.

A Ministerial Council that regards three huts as one can interpret anything into existence. However, a company actually intending to build anything might have hesitated after conducting its due diligence. As it was, they collect money for relinquishing their rights when the government finally loses patience with inactivity.

In the very long run, the rights are given to Simon Currant, a local tourism entrepreneur renowned for building lodges and villages and making money from them, rather than from the government. He apparently applies the first time round, making Jamie wonder at the naivety of the decision-makers in the Tasmanian Government. Because of the effect of the economic downturn on availability of finance, progress is slow at the shovel-ready Pumphouse Point, but the shovels eventually arrive and do their job.

The whole of government committee also identifies Cockle Creek as a possibility for a tourism development. Cockle Creek is as far
south as one can drive on mainland Tasmania. It is a 19\textsuperscript{th} century logging and whaling settlement, reclaimed by the bush, except where shacks and informal campgrounds keep nature at bay.

A Queensland entrepreneur develops a vision of wilderness accommodation nestled into hillside forest above the beach, fed by ship transport from Hobart to a new jetty, with the customers waving wads of one hundred dollar notes in delight as they touch land.

The Tasmanian decision-makers take the bait. All of this is going to be in the Southwest National Park, which is covered by the management plan on which WHAAC advises. When the Committee is taken down to Cockle Creek to inspect, the planner in charge of the development is almost bullying in its favour, indicating enormous pressure on him, as he is usually fanatical in his protection of values.

\textit{Two whales at Cockle Creek}
When it is obvious that WHAAC is not bounding in delight at the vision of another imaginative suit, in fact is vaguely hostile, the committee somehow misses out on seeing and commenting on documents related to the development that the committee legally should have seen. The fear must have been that members of the committee would leak the plans, thereby causing a public commotion. The planning process grinds on to a background of minor public resistance. Eventually, the development is approved almost as proposed. The naivety exhibited in the initial granting of rights to Pumphouse Point is tempered a little for Cockle Creek in that the developer had to undertake works within a prescribed time period to maintain his rights.

He bulldozes a crude road up the hill to the lodge site through the blackwood swamp in which the sewage treatment plant is to be located. He then buys an adjacent private block and has a minion talk to WHAAC about a variation in the plan to make their house central to the development. After that nothing else seems to happen lodgewise. Eventually, the government moves to revoke the development rights and gain funds from the developer for rehabilitation. As far as Jamie is aware, the matter is still in the courts.

**Sinking the moonboat**

Given the above experiences, some members of WHAAC are highly suspicious when a development plan for Cradle Mountain-Pencil Pine proposes a walking track between Pencil Pine and Waldheim, under which will flow sewage and electricity.

In its earlier days the committee proposes to remove the accommodation buildings at Waldheim, consistent with the idea of locating accommodation facilities outside the WHA. When this
recommendation is adopted by Parks, Christine Milne leads a successful public campaign to reverse the decision.

The membership of WHAAC is now such that a unanimous recommendation to remove anything valued by local Tasmanians is impossible. There is even a fight in WHAAC over surfacing the road from the park boundary to Dove Lake, because the dirt, pot holes and dust are part of the traditional experience. From Jamie’s point of view the road resolution is great: a bitumen road with innumerable chicanes and one way stretches preventing road kill, and the traditional stark white and grimy dust of the original road gone.

He also thinks that the export of sewage to a new plant to be built outside the WHA at Pencil Pine is a pretty good idea, having visited Cradle Valley since the early seventies and seen the products of one failed method of sewage disposal after another. However, there is provision for more electricity input and sewage output than is needed at present. Does this mean that an expansion of accommodation and facilities is planned?

There is no way that any advice from WHAAC can stop any major development, so electricity surges into Cradle Valley and sewage gurgles out, while people walk through beauteous country on a comfortable track, little suspecting what flows beneath their feet. Confirming the suspicions of WHAAC, it is not long before the excess of electricity is noted by yet another imaginative potential developer. An electric boat is to be moored near the Dove Lake car park, replenishing its energy as required from a plug at the end of the underground cable.

It will mainly float beneath the surface, but will have a transparent dome through which the tourists can view the scenery without being rained upon. Silently it will glide to where passengers disembark on to a wheelchair-ready track through the Ballroom
Forest, half way up the lake. Quiet, carbon-free, disability-friendly, biodiversity-neutral, what more do you want at Cradle, the icon of the Tasmanian wilderness experience? A Ferris wheel? A water slide? A submarine?

The committee unanimously recommends against the vessel, which they collectively christen the moonboat. The developer does not pursue the matter. If they had done so, through the traditional Tasmanian lobbying of politicians, who are so numerous that everyone knows at least one as a personal friend, the glint of reflected sun from the silently-gliding moon-like dome might by now have been experienced by walkers from Marions Lookout and other prominences around Dove Lake.

*On the edge of the wilderness - nature takes advantage of artifice. Note lack of Moonboat.*
Half a decade after the WHA expanded to take in some tall trees, the forests issue continues to fester in Tasmania and elsewhere. A National Forests Policy has been agreed to by all jurisdictions, emerging from the ESD process and the inquiry into forests held by the Resource Assessment Commission. This policy includes adequate reservation of forest biodiversity, old growth and wilderness.

The Commonwealth bureaucrats decide that it is safe to re-issue the Tasmanian woodchip export license. It is not. The Tasmanian Conservation Trust objects on the grounds that the license violates the obligations of the Commonwealth as expressed in the National Forests Policy, and wins.

Paul Keating is Prime Minister. He is furious with the bureaucrats who had allowed things to drift into a situation in which an export industry is threatened, and resolves to solve the issue within his own department. He sets up an Independent Scientific Committee to develop the criteria for forest conservation required under the National Forests Policy.

The Chief Scientist is the Chair. Jamie is one of the members. At the first meeting Jamie is amazed at the security systems used in the Prime Ministers Department, being used to walking in and out of government departments at will.

The security obstacles are a terrible nuisance, especially as he is not allowed to smoke his pipe in the building. Long gone are the days, as in the seventies, when meetings were conducted in a dense cloud of tobacco smoke. Decisions are now made in smoke-unfilled rooms.
The scientists are amiable and accomplished middle-aged or older blokes. The secretary of the committee is Rhonda Green, an extremely hard-working policy person in the Prime Ministers Department.

Jamie is the only scientist on the committee whose research experience is closely proximal to the task. Consequently, he does a lot of the drafting of text, with Rhonda being the other major contributor.

The hardest thing the committee does is to decide on the proportion of the area and old growth of different forest communities that need to be reserved to give the feeling that native forest biodiversity would be maintained if the rest were logged. There is not much research to go on. This research suggests that 15-30% of the original area of common communities is likely to maintain most biodiversity, although, at the time, the IUCN is promoting a target for protected areas of 10%. It turns out that the 10% target had no scientific basis, but rather was designed not to scare the politicians.

As the committee explicitly assumes that logging will not be followed by plantations or other forms of land clearance, and research shows that most native species survive at least one round of logging, its answer is 15%, with much higher targets for rare or threatened communities and specific action for threatened species.

Jamie is reasonably happy with this outcome as he had been involved in some of the research on logging impacts and also knows that the forests of Australia are in a state of expansion from a nadir during the Last Glacial. The wilderness and old growth targets are erroneously regarded by the Prime Ministers Department as non-scientific, so the scientists are not allowed to set them.

The report is published, then passed on to an intergovernmental committee called JANIS for further refinement. Mick Brown is on
this committee, representing Tasmania. The ultimate JANIS criteria are not as good as those of the Independent Scientific Committee, with the insertion of quite a few weasel words and ‘flexibility’ provisions, but are similar. They are to be used in the Regional Forest Agreement Process (RFA). The idea of the RFA process is to resolve forest conflicts for once and all by applying the conservation criteria within large regions, such as East Gippsland or Tasmania, and then allowing as much logging as is physically and economically sustainable; shades of ESD.

The RFA process requires a massive level of data collection and review. Detailed maps of the distribution of forest communities both for the mid 1990s and before the European invasion are needed as a precursor to planning reserves to satisfy the criteria. In some regions, such as north-eastern New South Wales, environmental domains, which are classifications of topography, geology and climate, are used as surrogates for forest communities. In others, such as Tasmania, an attempt is made to discriminate communities on the basis of their biological attributes.

In a contract for the Resource Assessment Commission in the early 1990s, Mick Brown and Jamie compare an environmental domain approach to reservation with an approach based on biological data and find that a combination of both would be ideal.

There is not enough time for both in the real world with too many shortcuts being taken in applying even one. People tasked with producing the pre-invasion patterns in Victoria label their activities ‘fantasy mapping’. In Tasmania, harassed mappers follow inadequate rule structures to extrapolate from forest type maps and ignore existing reliable mapping of parts of their regions and easy methods for discriminating some communities.

As a member of the mapping reference group Jamie tries to minimise these errors, even spending weekends doing mapping
himself, as with *Eucalyptus rodwayi* forest, which can be clearly discriminated on black and white photos. The RFA maps turn out to be pretty average, looking good at 1:500,000, but only moderately accurate at the target scale of 1:25,000, with lots of straight lines marking different interpreters. The old growth maps are worse and the wilderness maps slightly better.

In *Eucalyptus rodwayi* forest

Once the mapping and other data collection are finished, the drawing of the boundaries for new reserves retreats to the domain of the bureaucrats, who congregate with textas and maps in non-smoke-filled rooms, armed with the flexibility provisions in the JANIS criteria.

Their main task appears to be to minimise impact on the forest industries, with failures to attain targets for which there is enough public forest to do so being concentrated in the forest types most valued for logging.

The bureaucrats, very foolishly, fail to reserve most of the places most longed for by the members of the environmental movement, guaranteeing continuing conflict. They must have thought that looking after biodiversity would do it for the public or have highly valued biodiversity themselves, because the RFA is a great forest
biodiversity solution, with reserves scattered in the drier parts of the State where there were none previously and money allocated for obtaining reserves on private land, where most of the threatened species and communities are concentrated.

Having largely achieved his main forest conservation agenda, Jamie hopefully thinks that he can at last escape from forests and forestry and concentrate on researching the pressing biodiversity conservation needs of other ecosystems. This is not to be the case.

The Commonwealth sets up a scientific committee to determine the World Heritage values of Australia’s forests. Here Jamie is again, even as Chair in the second meeting. He loves these sorts of scientific meetings because the people are great and he learns so much. In the first one he learns that the Australian desert is globally outstanding for its diversity of lizards and ants. The second one is less exciting because the group concentrates on forests rather than world heritage as a whole, and Jamie already knows, or has created, the storylines.

The outcomes of this second meeting flow on to a process to gain world heritage status for the Blue Mountains in New South Wales. Jamie is contracted to do the natural values analysis. It turns out that the only strong argument for world heritage listing is to do with the amazing diversity of eucalypt species. A lot of other things, cultural and natural, are wonderful, but not globally outstanding. Even then, the IUCN assessors, led by Jim Thorsell, feel that it needs to be part of a serial nomination under the eucalypt theme, not a stand-alone nomination. Jim is rolled by adroit politics from the Australian Government when the nomination reaches the decision-making committee.

Jim is a lovely man, devoted to nature conservation. He is particularly fond of rainforest and tall, crumbling, glaciated mountains in plate subduction zones. He can also put up with a
volcano or two. His job is to flit from one gorgeous area to another deciding whether it satisfies the criteria for world heritage listing under natural values. Australia does not turn him on.

In Jamie’s first encounter with Jim, he is a sleepy American who has flitted from somewhere else in the world to reassess the Tasmanian WHA after it was proposed to be almost doubled in area following the Helsham Inquiry.

Greg Middleton from Parks, Peter Hitchcock, Jim and Jamie take off in a helicopter for a rapid inspection tour. It is a beautiful calm, sunny day with western Tasmania almost looking at its best. A bit more mist might have improved the mystery. The first destination is the Walls of Jerusalem. The helicopter lands on the lawn grassland on the saddle between the main Walls chamber and Dixon’s Kingdom, the closest thing to North America in Tasmania, with its grassy pencil pine forests and arroyo-like cliffs.

Jim yawns as Jamie talks about the wonder, beauty and uniqueness of the place. Within a minute or two, Grant Dixon angrily runs up to the machine, about to book the pilot for an unauthorised landing. He sees Greg and Jamie and calms down a little. Greg tells him that Jim is assessing the area for world heritage listing. Grant gruffly says ‘It is great isn’t it?’ and leaves. Although Grant, Greg, Peter and Jamie think the whole area is great, it is very apparent that Jim is less than impressed with the mountains, the evidence of past glaciations and the rainforests. Like New Zealanders who visit Tasmania, all he could see was ‘wee hulls’. Greg, Peter and Jamie think that a bit of juxtaposition of glaciated wilderness mountains to the coast might help and head the helicopter to the Southern Range.

Jim looks down at the south coast and suddenly wakes up. Much to the consternation of a group of campers, the helicopter lands on the beach at South Cape Rivulet where tall trees and wild seas greet
each other. Jim laconically opines that much more should have made of the coast.

*Peter Hitchcock, Greg Middleton and Jamie near Mt Bobs with pandani, celebrating convincing Jim Thorsell that the extension of the world heritage area is worthwhile. Note compulsory beards.*

At last it is apparent that he is not going to reject the extended listing that so many had worked so long to gain. A landing in the open flat south of Lake Sydney at Mt Bobs is followed by a celebratory chicken and champagne afternoon tea, Greg, Peter and Jamie flushed with success, Jim looking forward to bed. The helicopter flits off for something to do with firefighting. By the time it returns hypothermia has almost set in, seemingly an occupational hazard at Mt Bobs.

Jim is one of a team of three on the helicopter inspection trip for the Blue Mountains nomination. Unlike for the Tasmanian WHA,
Jamie has no great emotional attachment to the nomination, because, successful or not, the area will remain securely reserved. In the case of Tasmania success was necessary to achieve nature conservation through reservation. Nevertheless, Jamie feels that he has made a good case under the eucalypt theme, and that, in toto, the area deserves the status. He argues with Jim that the best of the best should be viewed thematically, with the best of all types of landscapes and ecosystems listed, rather than yet another crumbling glacial mountain. Jamie emphasises the outstanding aesthetics of eucalypt-dominated landscapes. The very blueness of the mountains is a product of eucalypt volatile oils. He then emphasises that the Blue Mountains epitomises such landscapes, being the best of the best for them.

A giant khaki helicopter settles down on a sandstone plateau in the centre of the extensive nomination. An Aboriginal rock circle and many species of eucalypt are in the foreground, with plateaus stretching bluely to the horizon in all directions. Down below the plateau, near a stream, the luminous green of rainforest trees contrasts with the pastel tones of the eucalypts. Underfoot there are many, many species of aromatic hard-leaved flowering plants, probably different from those on the other plateaus in the viewfield, the Blue Mountains being noted for microspeciation.

One could sense a spiritual peace settling on the Australians as they squat in the quiet after the rotors stop spinning. The assessors look bored to discombobulated. Jim tells Jamie about his last assessment, in West Irian, where the potential WHA ran from a glacier to the sea, mostly through untouched rainforest, then looks around in disgust. The recently discovered living fossil, Wollemi pine, only known from one remote stand, the leaves of which the helicopter stirs from the air, is not enough rainforest for him.

Despite his lack of attachment to typical Australian landscapes, Jim does see merit in thematic arguments and has been instrumental in
many Australian natural listings. His perception of the Blue Mountains as marginal for listing is correct. The idea of a serial listing is good, but not politically possible at the time – too many State governments would have had to be involved.

*More to Jim’s taste*
Snowy Mountain scene
Jamie is fully aware how difficult it could be to get Australian governments to work together. This is not necessarily bad. The expansion of the reserve system in Tasmania from about 5% of the State when Jamie first lived in it to over 40% in the early years of the twenty-first century only took place because the Commonwealth forced most of it on the locals. But, Jamie knew that co-operation did exist. He had undertaken a consultancy for the Australian Alps Liaison Committee on the international significance of the Australian Alps. This committee remarkably involved four governments, those of the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Victoria and Australia as a whole.

Jamie knows the Australian Alps national parks and reserves pretty well, except for Namadgi National Park in the ACT. He is invited on a tour through the Namadgi Wilderness Area. Jamie is driven off from the ACT Parks headquarters in a four wheel drive in the wrong direction to get to the airport. Aaah, he thinks, the helicopter must be waiting closer to the park.

The drive is long. The driver occasionally opens and closes a locked gate. A giant impoundment sits to the left of the car for a while. The road is in such beautiful condition that a four wheel drive is totally superfluous to need. The vehicle breaks out of a rather nice eucalypt forest on to a lovely flat dominated by native tussock and kangaroo grasses. The grasses are being grazed upon by a mob of grey kangaroos. There are some rather dark looking trees on the far end of the flat. Jamie finds them difficult to identify at a distance. He soon sees a nineteenth century homestead behind exotic pines. Jamie is in the core of the wilderness. Eat your heart out Mt Bobs, he thinks.
When, in 1965, Sue and Jamie visit Mt Kosciusko, the highest peak in Australia, they drive all the way to the summit, where they have the option of purchasing ice cream from a van. Ski lodges are prominent on either side of the road as they approach their goal through the national park.

Although the last part of the road to the summit is later closed and the summit parking area rehabilitated, the road to the alpine zone is still flanked by ski village development when an IUCN world heritage assessor is given an informal peek at the natural wonders of the alpine national parks of Australia. The rumour is that he just said: ‘forget it!’

However, under a thematic approach, there is a potential argument for a nomination based on alps to the sea eucalypt forest in a region that was a refugium for trees during the Quaternary glacial periods. Too bad that there are a few gaps at the lower altitudes, but these could always be filled with new reserves. Too bad that the Victorians had ‘once off logging’ in their national parks, but they could always stop it. The eucalypt forests in themselves are highly diverse, but not to a degree to compete with some other regions of Australia, such as the Blue Mountains, therefore their world heritage importance relies on the altitudinal transect story.

The alpine vegetation provides some world quality wildflower displays, but is similar to that in parts of the South Island of New Zealand, where it has been disturbed much less than in Australia. The most interesting alpine story for world heritage listing is the role of wind-borne dust from the dry western interior in building up deep and distinctive alpine humus soils in the alpine zone on mountains that are rounded and mostly unglaciated. These are globally highly unusual alpine mountains. They are also highly unlikely to appeal to Jim.
The main problem with attempting listing as world heritage is with the integrity of the area. In New South Wales, the high country vegetation is still recovering from stock grazing and the damage visited upon it by hydro-electric development. Ski villages and associated infrastructure are expanding within the national park. In the Victorian high mountains cattle are still being grazed, areas are excised from national parks for ski developments as needed and there is once off logging in the forests.

In both New South Wales and Victoria there are growing populations of wild horses that are severely damaging the vegetation and streams, and there is no effective action to do anything about them because of the public attachment to brumbies. The people in the ACT just shoot them from behind the wilderness gates, eliminating their problem for a while.

Jamie’s report, which states the above in a lot more words, is received very badly, especially by the Victorians, its release being very much delayed while unsubtle pressure is put on him to change parts of the text. As Jamie dislikes doing contracts because they take time away from his research, he has no motivation to change his opinions, so does not. Unfortunately, after the lapse of a few years he is seen, even by the Victorians, as someone who would be useful on committees to do with the Australian Alps, so his research suffers again.

The venue for the first of these committees is a depressingly unimaginative multi-storied building in the Melbourne CBD. The floor with the meeting room seems largely bereft of people. It also appears to be the administrative centre for the bureaucrats managing Victoria’s parks. The blue-faded photos on the walls are of picnic shelters in reserves in the urban area formerly managed by the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works. At one stage, among ongoing administrative upheavals, the Board of Works has effectively taken over all of Victoria’s public protected areas. If
you see a nice picnic table or drain in a remote Victorian reserve, it probably dates from this era.

Victoria is an excellent illustration of Jamie’s general law that re-organisations of nature conservation agencies increase exponentially from the date of their foundation until the time between changes is too short to devise a new logo.

These reorganisations are one of the many ways in which growthist governments pretend to look after nature, while trying to prevent anyone they employ from actually doing so. This theory of Jamie’s is geometrically similar to his earlier theory that the number of jobs predicted to be lost if a development does not go ahead increases exponentially until the decision date.

Not only headquarters is depopulated, but also the field. Jamie is fortunate enough to gain a grant from the Australian Research Council to look at variation in alpine soils, vegetation and invertebrate communities over the whole of Australia, including Tasmania. His employee on the project, Kerry Bridle, and Jamie travel through the mainland mountains to note down and collect things.

Kerry really enjoys the wild horses who visit a camp site in eastern Victoria, being a horseperson who owns the miniature crotch-snuffling Horrie and the dangerous John.

Their other exciting wildlife experience is a fox trotting along a road with a giant rabbit in its mouth. This is the first fox Jamie has seen, despite living in Victoria for a long time, and having heard his grandfather in Macedon constantly complaining that foxes took his chooks. In the mid noughties Jamie sees another one in an urban wetland reserve in Melbourne he is visiting with his mother.

Kerry and Jamie have a Victorian permit that requires them to contact parks rangers to let them know when they will be collecting
their data. They can never find a ranger, nor get a response when they try to phone in business hours. In the end they stop trying.

They are on their last Victorian mountain when a convoy of vehicles drives up and stops. People get out of the first one and walk towards them. One of them is a ranger, who knows Jamie.

![Club Lake in Snowy Mountains. Note absence of rangers.](image)

Embarrassed at the lack of required contact, Jamie make a compliment on how good this part of the alpine plain is after stock have been taken off. ‘Do you think so?’ he says, in a way that expresses his doubts on the veracity of this proposition.

It is indeed a bit long on big tussocks and a bit short on pretty herbs, but at least there are no weeds or bare ground, which are common where cattle graze.

Several years after this trip, someone in whatever parks was called at the time, or in the Minister’s office, must have thought so too, because it turns out that the composition of the committee set up to review the evidence about grazing after the 2003 fire in the alpine national parks points to only one outcome. The committee consists
of scientists. There is a scientist or two prepared to defend alpine grazing (not that they were on the committee), but the prevailing scientific consensus, based on an overwhelming amount of really convincing data, is that cattle are not good for alpine nature conservation values, water quality or water yield.

Cattle are also of no use for reducing fire hazard in alpine vegetation. This is why there are no cattle any more in Kosciusko and Namadgi national parks. The man from Snowy River had kept rationality at bay in Victoria, but his horse was fast becoming lame and his Akubra moth-eaten. The effects of stock grazing at lower altitudes are not as certain as for the very high country, but it is the high country the graziers most value, for cultural and economic reasons.

Eventually, the Victorian Labor government very bravely excludes cattle from alpine areas. The Liberal government that replaces them promises to bring back the grazing. It runs into the obstacle of national heritage listing, which, as they obviously had not realised, exposes them to Commonwealth interference.

The Liberals try to divide the scientific community by offering big money to research the effects of grazing on blazing, but do not succeed in carrying it through in face of a media battering by the majority of scientists, who also refuse to participate in a steering committee for the project, which is portrayed as window-dressing.

Jamie has some interesting interviews with Victorian media on the subject, fortified by research he is involved in which indicates that grazing actually causes blazing by increasing the concentration of dead fuel in tussocks. It is hard for Jamie to get this point across in a five second grab.

Back in the early noughties, Jamie is also involved in the revision of the Kosciuszko National Park Management Plan. This gives him the great pleasure of working with the lovely, quiet-spoken Alec
Costin, the scientist who managed to get grazing out of the Snowy Mountains with a combination of excellent research and effective politicking through the Academy of Science.

The plan revision process involves a scientific group, of which Jamie was one, and a separate stakeholder group. This is an unfortunate way to organise things, as Jamie finds out when he attends a meeting of the other group. It is an action replay of the traditional user’s hostility to Parks, scientists and each other that had been partly defused in Tasmania by the protagonists being in each other’s company for too long. The chair has a great technique for seeking resolution of conflicts, but not enough time to do so.

Jamie learns a lot about wild dogs and hydatids while working on this plan. The adjoining farmers blame Parks for the wild dogs, which actually move both ways, leaving behind potentially lethal poos. After seeing the photos of cysts in random parts of the flesh of hydatid victims, he wishes that he had not drunk from the streams on his research trip.

Eventually, a new plan emerges. Nothing much improves for nature conservation, while there is a bit of easing off for recreational hut builders and ski developers.
Subalpine forest, Baw Baws
CHAPTER THIRTEEN
CARBONISING FOREST CONSERVATION

*Forest clearfelled by Gunn’s, not regenerating particularly well, but with rare wattle*

*More forest frolics*
Just when Jamie thought that he had been released from the burden of forests, the Tasmania Together process emerges from the political mists. This process is set up by the new premier, Jim Bacon, the brother of the admirably anarchic journalist of Jamie’s youth, Wendy, to develop a consensual vision for the future of Tasmania. There is much consultation with those who allow themselves to be consulted, travelling shows and glossy documents.

Jamie quietly ignores it all until he is asked to be on the Environmental Reference Panel, the job of which is to digest the results of consultation and come up with recommendations for
‘stretch standards’ for the future to present to the Community Leaders Group for ratification.

His conscience conquering his desire not to be there, he turns up at the first meeting to see a collection of his old sparring partners, like the mellifluous botanist turned forest industry advocate, Ian Whyte, his old research colleagues, like Mick Brown, environmental activists, businessmen and volunteer community members. It is quite a reunion of forest lags, among a few new faces.

Jamie’s main agendas are to limit land clearance and look after threatened species. He thinks that he can quietly sneak them in, with the support of Mick and a few others, while everyone else fights over old growth forests. One of the young environmentalists queers this approach, by making it plain that he is going to oppose Jamie’s agendas unless Jamie supports the old growth reservation program. As a result of having to support old growth, Jamie’s attempt to get a no net loss of natural vegetation standard fails, although high percentage targets for retention are ultimately adopted.

The committee is unable to resolve only one matter, the logging of old growth forest, with most of the committee strongly supporting the opinion that it should be stopped and the rest vehemently opposing this option. The Community Leaders Group, which has zero expertise in the area, is forced to come up with something on old growth forests, which turn out to be the only sticking point in the whole process. The spirit of Solomon must have been consulted before the leaders developed the standard: ‘no more clearfelling of old growth forests after 2020’. Forestry Tasmania, sighing in relief, immediately launches into research on aggregated retention and strip cutting of old growth forests.

Tasmania Together, now extinct, used to have a secretariat and board that reported on progress in achieving the standards. Jamie
is invited to a meeting on old growth as part of its many reviews. Hans Drielsma is there, not far off retirement and still being more reasonable than Jamie. Old growth forest was about to leap in area, as it was going to be 110 years after the extensive 1898 fires. Jamie suggests that it would be easy enough to plan to have a constant quantum of old growth forests, but no-one except him is interested.

Jamie gets off lightly from the 2004 ‘Community RFA’ of John Howard. He vaguely remembers writing something for someone on the conservation values of the Pipeline Road rainforests, which are reserved, despite their potentially lucrative red myrtle. A document Jamie writes with Geoff Law on desirable extensions to the WHA may have had a little to do with the new reserves then or in 2013, although the main area Jamie wanted for an extension of the WHA did not get up either time. This was the Vale of Belvoir. The Hartz Hole left by Peter Hitchcock and Jamie is finally filled by Howard.

Much to Jamie’s surprise, the most recent episode in the Tasmanian forest wars almost ends in an armistice that possibly could have amounted to peace in our time. You may think that this is because Jamie finally achieved separation from a forest process, but it is probably more that the warring parties finally had things to trade, instead of just trying to wrestle forest land off one another.

In the time of the RFAs the Queensland environmentalists did a direct deal with the forest industries, leaving the governments on the sidelines. In the twenty-teens, environmentalists also trade reservation of most of the few remaining areas of reasonable forest in Tasmania for acceptance of forestry activity elsewhere.

The effective trade is half a million hectares of newly reserved old growth forest for Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification of logging of the rest of the native forest outside reserves, most of which has already been logged at least once. Hard line activists hate it, hard line businessmen and rednecks hate it, people concerned
with biodiversity conservation fear that it will result in no further action on more important conservation issues than forests, but it gets close to sticking, to the relief of most Tasmanians. But stick it does not.

Jamie rabble-rousing for tall forests 2014

The Liberal governments in both State and Commonwealth vow to revoke the forests added to the WHA, and abandon the forest agreement, all to cement the redneck vote. Once more Jamie is out in public supporting tall forests, motivated by the imminent prospect of all forms of reservation being regarded as temporary, even world heritage. Temporary reserves are a really bad look for the long term future of native plants and animals, which do not move as often as humans do, and probably have a stronger sense of place.

The Worldwide Fund for Nature and Greenpeace set up the FSC in co-operation with friendly members of businesses related to wood
to allow consumers to buy, confident that wood products were produced in an environmentally and socially sound manner. The FSC provokes a rash of industry and government certification schemes, none of which end up being accepted by the consumer, and most of which are elaborations on the ISO1400 standard, which is basically achieved if you monitor the damage you do.

Previously logged forest

The Australian Forest Standards are not the worst of them. The best thing about the Australian Forest Standards is that they stop Forestry Tasmania from continuing its huge Commonwealth-subsidised program of converting native forest into *Eucalyptus nitens* plantations, a program that mocks the assumption that the Independent Scientific Committee made on the persistence of natural forest.

At one stage WHAAC is allowed to have a quick look at the highly confidential plantation planning maps for the Southern Forests. The areas planned for plantations are in duck egg blue. Jamie gains the impression that most of the forests are this rather beautiful colour, reminiscent of the juvenile leaves of *Eucalyptus nitens*. 
Jamie had long been disturbed by the vast areas of plantations replacing native forests, grasslands and good farmland in the northwest and northeast of the State.

The herbicide, Atrazine, banned elsewhere, is sprayed to ensure that no other plants survive under the blue-foliaged trees. Jamie remarks offhandedly to a journalist that the plantations ‘had all the biodiversity of a car park’. She quite likes the phrase, so uses it in a report, provoking a cascade of criticism that she deflects back on to Jamie.

There is at least one species in this car park

Jamie discovers a web conversation on the subject by accident. People who Jamie presumes are forest scientists earnestly point out that plantations can be very biodiverse, certainly more than car parks. One person generously excuses Jamie for opining otherwise, because they know he likes a joke. Jamie still reckons that an
atrazined plantation has less biodiversity than the typical car park, but his theory does remain to be tested by observation. Unfortunately for science, the collapse of the tax-driven plantation schemes and the bankruptcy of Gunns that follow the Global Financial Crisis halt chemical application, allowing a rich variety of native and exotic plants to colonise the formerly bare ground beneath the trees and a rich variety of insects to chew their non-pesticided leaves.

For the existence of the FSC to be effective, there has to be pressure to gain certification, either from the people who purchase the wood to add value, those who sell wood to the consumer, or the consumer. As most of Tasmania’s wood goes to Japan, conservationists target this nation, with a stream of people like Peg Putt, a past leader of the Greens in State Parliament, lobbying vigorously.

Jamie gains the impression that it is more an attempt to avoid unnecessary discord than environmental responsibility that makes the Japanese reconsider their sources of wood. After all, there are plenty of other countries producing hardwood chips, and more supply than demand, so why expose oneself to unpleasantness?

It probably does not help that the woodchips are coming from one company, Gunns, and that this company is intensely hated by most environmentalists. For a while the company gives the impression that it is running the Lennon Labor government. Many prominent and not so prominent environmentalists are put through the prolonged torture of being sued for protesting against Gunn’s activities and proposals.

The suing stratagem backfires badly. Protests intensify. Still Wild Still Threatened founds itself then sets up a camp in the Florentine Valley, where there is a world record tree sit by Miranda Gibson. The Huon Valley Environment Centre continues to disrupt logging
in the Weld Valley. The people doing the protesting are young, dedicated and too poor to worry about being sued.

Many of the students in Jamie’s School of Geography and Environmental Studies are heavily involved. He resists their invitations to attend demonstrations in the forest, still being averse to self-punishment for good causes, but does agree to speak at one or two more conveniently located meetings.

A meeting at Cygnet takes Jamie back to the hippy days of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The clothing and hair styles are identical, as are the grubby young children of older children. Those not attached to the breasts of their long-skirted and long-haired mothers crawl and run and climb everywhere as the speakers dispense wisdom.

The rich odour of vegetarian whole food, the whiff of chai, and the burned lawn clippings smell of a familiar combusting dicotyledonous herb raise olfactory memories of the commune that Lou and Rose Costello lived in for a while.

Outside the main doors of the hall, a group of hippies make slow intoxicated talk as they amiably lurch, reminding Jamie of the slide of many of his more hippy university friends into an obsession with heroin that destroyed their social and environmental consciences, and some of their lives.

**Carbon-based science wars**

Highly appropriately, the meeting is about learning from the past, so Jamie talks about the arguments that resulted in increased reservation of forests in the past and those that he thought might have some traction in the future.

He does not predict that FSC certification would be the key. Rather, he argues that carbon conservation would be the new black in the
conservation of old growth forests. It turns out that Forestry Tasmania get on to it quickly, undertaking an analysis that purports to show that their activity as a whole is carbon neutral or positive. This analysis is both too wide and too partial. The only way that the sums add up for forests as a whole is not to count the carbon loss from the natural forests that had been cleared or logged before the present forests established. There is no way that any logging of old growth forest can end up as neutral, much less positive. The tall old growth eucalypt forests have more above ground carbon than any other vegetation type in the world, and the goods that are made from them soon disappear into the atmosphere, as does the waste after logging.

Before Jamie knows it he is once again engaged in word wars with Forestry Tasmania. These carbon science word wars are sillier than most, as Forestry Tasmania could potentially have cleaned up from old growth forest conservation, given the results of the independent research group of which Jamie is a small part, because he is co-supervising the PhD of the key researcher, Chris Dean.

Another PhD student Jamie supervises, Jane Bryan, enlists Jamie in carbon-related science wars in the tropics. Before she starts her doctorate, she works as research assistant with Phil Shearman from the University of Papua-New Guinea.

Phil is a tall and cultured scion of an environmentalist Adelaide academic family. His father had written a book Jamie possesses called ‘Green or Gone’. Phil turns up as an honours student in Jamie’s department, initially not under his supervision. Having discovered that his cautious supervisor was a bad choice for the highly risky research project he wants to undertake, he latches on to Jamie, who is a probable victim of toxoplasmosis. Jamie is happy to guide him in avoiding the bureaucratic obstacle course in the
university and make a few suggestions on how he might go about his hazardous work.

How much carbon and who cares?

Phil miraculously manages to get WWF funding to go to Papua-New Guinea to research the social and environmental impacts of a large mining operation at Porgera. He disappears into the jungle for a few months, then returns to write an elegant first class thesis which damns the activities of the miners. He disappears from Jamie’s sight again. He must have suggested that Jane do her PhD with Jamie, which was a great gift, because Jamie learned so much from her and his renewed interactions with him.

Phil is highly successful in getting money for his remote sensing operation within UPNG. He efficiently works out the recent clearance and degradation of rainforest. Jane assists with her geographic information system and remote sensing skills. He now wants to find out how much carbon was being lost because of this activity. There are few data on the carbon content of the PNG forests, yet these data are becoming more and more important. REDD, a scheme to trade retention of tropical forests for western
carbon offsetting money, requires such accounting. The foresters want to have their cake and eat it too, suggesting that logging of forests could contribute to carbon conservation, thus counting positively in any REDD calculations. This proposal for REDD+ means that conservationists need to know the effects of logging on carbon retention. There are no data for PNG and few elsewhere.

It turns out that there is an Australian group of foresters also working on the carbon impacts of logging in PNG. As is the case with the Tasmanian carbon work, the foresters submit carping criticisms of the published work from the project to academic journals. Jane and her colleagues reply and reciprocate with carping criticisms of the forester’s work while Jane collects and analyses enough data to break the axles of a log truck.

The data show that logging, even reduced impact logging, has a major impact on carbon stocks in rainforest, both directly, and in the clearance and fire it indirectly promotes. Jane, Phil and Jamie calculate the return to local peoples and governments in tropical countries from logging and find that its exclusion is a very economical way of conserving carbon. Not that anyone in power seems to care any more – ‘Apres moi le deluge’ is the spirit of the times.

The PNG forest industry is a mess and the remaining forests are in dire peril. The Australians left locals with computer programs to work out the sustained yield of forest, but no-one in the PNG forest bureaucracy understands that there is a discounting quantum, that varies with forest type, that needs to be inserted for each operation, so the calculated yield over the concession period is usually about double the real yield.

People in the PNG government start selling carbon offsets from forests that they are also trying to get under logging concession, and pass a bill that will make it possible for oil palm plantations to
replace rainforest against the will of the people who communally own the same land.

As in Australia, members of the political class gives away almost anything they can to get a big development, whether it benefits the country or not.

Jamie suspects that in PNG the rewards may often be more than the glowing feeling that comes from the knowledge that one is on a subsidiary executive committee of the global ruling class.

In the paddock
Conserving on private land

Soon after Jamie arrives in Tasmania, he sees that the most serious nature conservation problems are on private land. One of the blokes in the university car pool tells Jamie that there is a lot of good land uncleared in Tasmania. He and many others obviously want to rectify this deficiency. An amiable farmer on the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Committee in the 1970s proudly tells Jamie that he is making a substantial contribution to the project. His land now supports eucalypt plantations.

Everywhere Jamie drives in Tasmania in the 1970s, farmers are knocking over or ploughing up or draining or inundating natural vegetation. He finds this destruction of the bush highly distressing, beginning to hate having to drive along the same road twice.

In the early eighties he uses the first Landsat satellite images to map bush loss and repeats the exercise a few times until the government eventually takes it up. He calculates that, between 1972 and 1999, a quarter of a million hectares of native bush are destroyed in Tasmania, mostly on private land, although the substantial contribution of the Hydro and forestry on public land deserves acknowledgement.

In the mid-1980s Jamie despairs about ever conserving the drier parts of Tasmania. He works on documenting its vegetation because he thinks that someone in future generations, if any eventuate, might have some interest in what was there before. This despair eventually turns out to be only partially warranted, with 1985 being the year from which both optimism and achievement grew.
The 1985 honours cohort

Nineteen eighty-five is a cusp year for Jamie in many ways, presaging an explosion of responsibility within the university, his profession and the country. He remembers it most for the four people who undertook a fourth year thesis under his supervision. It is the first time he has more than one fourth year student to look after. Louise Gilfedder and Jennie Whinam are friends who both worked together in the Wilderness Society. Louise is a speech therapist before deciding that she wants to be an ecologist. She knows Dave Bowman, who suggests doing a graduate Diploma with Honours with Jamie as a step in achieving her ambition. Jennie was a secretary before doing a degree at ANU where she gets to know Geoff Hope, the biogeographer. She moves from Canberra with her partner to a small property in Sandfly. She also wants to become an ecologist. Jayne Balmer, a strong-willed undergraduate Hobartian who had been arrested in the campaigns against the Hydro, is the third person with the same ambition. They all undertake alpine projects for their theses. The fourth student, bare-footed Rod Fensham, is so laid back it is difficult to tell if he
has any ambitions. Like Phil Shearman, Rod is the son of a university professor. He starts university in Victoria, but finds it stifling, so leaves to eventually establish a plant nursery in Macedon, where Jamie had visited his grandparents when a child and young adolescent.

In the summer of 1983, Rod is doing the Field Botany unit run by Bill Jackson, the Professor of Botany, when most of Macedon, including his nursery and the house Jamie’s grandparents lived in, goes up in flames. This serendipitous conflagration leads Rod to decide to use the insurance money to finish a degree in science at the University of Tasmania. He does Jamie’s third year unit and thinks that he is worth learning from, so accompanies him on some of his alpine research field trips, which at this stage are mainly on the Central Plateau, the prime trout-fishing wilderness in Australia. Rod stands naked with his fishing rod in the middle of tarns, casting flies on unresponsive waters as trout leap all about.

On one trip with Rod, Jamie wakes up on a windy night to see something plucking at his tent. Thinking that, if it were not the wind, he should do something, he gives the plucked area a bit of kick, thereby presumably diverting a devil to a tent with less easily awoken inhabitants. Rod and his friend Lisa wake to repel a Tasmanian devil that has broken into their tent, broken into a pack, and is just about to fang into a tube of their tahini.

**Grassy gambols one - getting to know the graziers**

Rod’s thesis topic is not alpine. He is to survey the natural vegetation remnants of the northern Midlands and reconstruct the pre-European vegetation from these data and historical sources.

Rod is given custody of the Grasslandmobile, otherwise known as the Staff Car, a venerable small red vehicle that the TCT had
purchased for the use of the grasslands project for $200.00 from Kath Dickinson when she left Tasmania for New Zealand.

Although it has to be driven with the windows open because of the exhaust that is somehow released into the cabin, it is an amazingly durable vehicle, which one could use on four wheel drive tracks as well as the open road. Rod decorates it internally with dried native grass inflorescences. After the grasslands book is finished, Peg Putt, then the Director of the TCT, takes control of the Staff Car as an executive, rather than research, vehicle. Her husband, Alistair Graham, crashes it on his way home. He survives with ongoing damage. The Staff Car is no more.

Rod mainly does his grassland quadrats on roadsides, in rubbish dumps and in cemeteries because neither he nor Jamie realise that most of the remaining lowland native grassland is in private paddocks heavily grazed by sheep. However, he does make the first contacts of Jamie’s research group with the people who hold the future of native grassland and grassy woodlands in their hands, the owners of the run country.

Most of these graziers are from English yeoman families who had been granted land in the 1820s and 1830s. Rod meets a scion of one of these families in a Midlands public bar. As it does, conversation drifts to grasslands. It turns out that this scion was soon to inherit a substantial property nearby, which, he accurately assures Rod, has heaps of native grassland. There is a slight problem in that his aunty has been running the place and does not want to vacate just because she is not the oldest son, but he could show Rod if he were interested. They walk up the drive towards the colonial stone mansion, only to flee from the shotgun pellets loosed by the aunty in their direction.

This baptism of beer and fire resulted in the establishment of good relationships with the grazier when the succession is finally
affected. When Louise Gilfedder is working on rare and threatened plants in the Midlands, she and Jamie are occasionally allowed to stay on the property, in the deer shooters quarters. The first time they visit, they are taken out by the grazier to see a lovely native grass-covered valley. The grazier likes having lots of wildlife in his gorse-scattered native pastures. He talks a little about the gorse problem he had inherited, then demonstrates how well a gorse bush will burn. Flames leap to five times the height of the plant. An eastern quoll flees to another bush. The valley had obviously been ploughed in the nineteenth century, but Louise and Jamie are rapt to see the grassland growing on the plough mounds is dominated by the native kangaroo grass and is highly rich in other native species. They are also shown an extensive area of Poa tussock grassland close to the river and some interesting exotic plants that they are asked to identify in his decaying and neglected colonial era garden.

The first strain in their relationship is when the grazier asks Louise to do an environmental impact assessment for a dam he wanted to build to irrigate his paddocks on the flats. Louise is a bit upset that the site is native grassland. He later clears his Poa grassland on the flats despite telling Louise and Jamie that a neighbour had done this and had just brought up tick plant. The last time Jamie sees him, Louise, by then working for the government, another person from the government and Jamie were flying in a light plane over the Midlands, to map the distribution of the rapidly diminishing native grasslands. The grazier is at the airport with his wife, who has recently restored his house and garden back from the decrepitude of his bachelor days. He appears suspicious of the activities of the group of scientists, as he well might be, as their fervent desire is to conserve remnant grassland and grassy woodland of which he still has a large area. However, by this time Jamie and Louise realise that sheep grazing can be a plus in
conserving grasslands, which become less diverse in native species when not grazed by natives or stock. They do not want sheep taken off, they just do not want any more grasslands destroyed by plough or dam.

Great place for rare grassland species

Jamie eventually realises that he has very different desires for the landscape, and perceptions of its content, than those who use the land for a living. There is no way that graziers contemplate imperilling their bottom line for nature conservation. They often like native plants and animals that do not get in the way of production to any great extent or, indeed, help them make money, but if the nature they value gets in the way of substantial profit, it is eliminated.

When Jamie first talks with the Midlands farmers, the conservation issue that most absorbs them is the dieback of paddock trees. In response to this concern Jamie sets up an experiment to work out what works to keep the trees alive. He finds that possum-proofing
is effective for adult trees, and fencing from stock for getting tree regeneration. A decade later, the remaining live paddock trees, along with the deceased, are bowled over to install pivot irrigators. Louise and Jamie gets to know many of the Tasmanian graziers. Their properties make their hearts ache for well-warranted fear of loss. There are places that still resemble the landscapes in the paintings of Glover, full of native grasses, wildflowers and umbrageous trees, as well as the occasional sheep. Jamie drives the Staff Car through a valley owned by Major Cameron; a valley still largely native grassland, grading into grassy woodland and forest on the slopes, full of threatened plant species.

Louise and Jamie become friendly with the Major, who enlists Jamie to help close a road reserve through his grasslands and talks about the way he manages native grasslands with him. The Major demonstrates his burning techniques to a group of grassland ecologists on an excursion after a conference, lighting up tussock after tussock in a strong wind, and apologising for the lack of carry. The Major does not like wild animals much, eliminating forester kangaroos from his pastures, although he is prepared to enlist the thylacines he sees at his rubbish tip to achieve political ends.

**Thylacines, devils and quolls**

Jamie believes that the Major does see thylacines at his tip. A mature age PhD student, who had just migrated from Britain to a job in Launceston, and did not know that thylacines were supposed to be extinct, saw one on a road nearby. He had a camera, but thought to himself: ‘I will see plenty of these’. He hasn’t.

Jon Marsden-Smedley, one of the few people who has tarried long on the wild southwest coast, tells Jamie of a chat with fishermen who had come ashore in a dinghy. One fisherman idly inquires whether Jon had seen the tiger with her cubs. Jon, thinking the
fisherman is full of shit, replies that he hasn’t. The fisherman then
tells Jon that if he goes around the next headland there is a cave
with paintings of feet. Jon checks it out and there are the feet.

Pat Wessing tells Jamie that she saw a thylacine on the Central
Plateau in the 1950s; ‘a poor raggedy old thing’ she says.
In the early 1980s, Christina and Jamie walk into Black Bluff to
camp the night, so that Jamie can collect yet some more alpine
vegetation data. An unholy and totally unfamiliar ‘yip-yip-yip’
rends the still misty air. Inside the tent, they cling to each other closer than before. This is about the time that a PWS officer gets a clear and prolonged view of a thylacine at his camp site, not far away.

Soon afterwards, Christina and Jamie are to get a quick glimpse of a large animal with stripes as they drive down the Hartz Mountains Road. In the noughties Jamie gets a less reliable glimpse of something thylacine-sized and shaped emerging from forest near a camp on the edge of Paradise Plains at dusk. It may have been a psychosomatic one, of which there are probably almost as many as psychosomatic leeches.

A lot of people who frequent remote bush have thylacine stories of one kind or another. Most keep them to themselves outside camp fire, choofer or Trangia chat. Given the total reliability of the PWS sighting in 1982, it was premature to declare the species extinct in 1986, especially given that snaring, a major cause of mortality, had effectively ceased more than a decade before.

Jamie worries that the fox 1080 baiting program may have killed more thylacines than foxes. Given that many land owners do not allow baiting to take place, the program may have been much worse than useless, as saturation baiting is required to get rid of foxes, which possibly travel less than thylacines.

When Rod and Lisa shoo a devil out of their tent they are privileged. Seeing any of the marsupial carnivores in the wild is a rare event, even for those, like Jamie, who do a lot of work and recreation in the bush. Even corpses on roadsides are rarely seen, almost all of the substantial road toll being possums, pademelons, wombats and wallabies. Jamie has seen healthy devils in the bush twice, once on Grass Tree Hill near Hobart and once on the upper Ouse River, the latter a young one gambolling on the flats.
With Irenyj Skira and Louise Gilfedder, Jamie comes across the first devil recorded dying from facial tumour disease in the Midlands of Tasmania. In a happier experience, Jennie Whinam, Alex Buchanan and Jamie have an eastern quoll beg food from them at their camp near Lake Ewart, deep in the western Tasmanian wilderness. It is very happy to eat porridge despite theoretically being a carnivore.

A devil in retreat

Grassy gambols two

Louise, Irenyj and Jamie are in the Midlands bush because they have a substantial grant from Land and Water Australia (LWA) and Australian Wool Innovations (AWI) which involves mammal surveys on the grazing runs, as well as sundry other activities aiming to improve nature conservation while also improving farm enterprise profitability.

To get this grant requires many hours in gatherings of researchers and stakeholders, both to develop priorities for research and to ensure that the stakeholders are happy with the research program. There are waves of clashing agendas that eventually calm into lowest common denominators.

These types of meetings are a totally crap way to develop useful research programs. The stakeholders have a really weird idea of what is research and what research should be done. The researchers
try to work out what fantasy they have to develop to get stakeholders on side and let them do the research they want to do anyway. The funders teeter between conforming to the latest academic fashion, pushing their own political agendas and keeping the stakeholders on side.

One thing funders are certain about is that they want their projects to involve as many ‘partners’ as possible, all making their own contributions of resources, with logos ready to be placed on ‘products’ in order to achieve ‘outcomes’. Thanks to Louise, there is assembled the requisite team of partners with the requisite promise of resources, most of which prove illusory. At least the team has enough logos to make it difficult to fit the title and their names on the first powerpoint slide, and to mercifully take up space on their products.

The crux meeting for the grant is held behind the bakery next to the Scottish Shop in Ross. There are quite a few of the more prosperous graziers from the old families there, most of whom the team already know.

The storyline is that the team will add to the knowledge of the natural wonders of sheep runs, so that the wool from them can be sold at an environmental premium. Some are hostile to this idea. Most say that there might be a chance of finding out, or achieving, something useful from it and why would they want the money to go to another State? Jamie suspects that they also thought it might be good to have the main person advocating nature conservation on their lands in the sheep camp, rather than outside it.

Towards the end of the project, one grazier confides in Jamie that it was a terrible waste of time having to educate successive waves of people sent out to achieve nature conservation on their lands.

Once the grant is gained, the team is expected to immediately produce extension material and interact with the stakeholder
community as a whole in ‘field days’, in a situation in which the researchers have zero results.

Experts in communication are sent to tell the researchers how to get their work to result in cultural change. Jamie finds this advice slightly bewildering, as he did not apply for research money to achieve cultural change, but to find out what was going on in the sheep runs and the wool markets. There is also the problem of ‘what cultural change?’ Land and Water Australia seemed to have a vision of integrating nature conservation into productive landscapes. Australian Wool Innovations had been persuaded by LWA that it might be possible to make money out of nature conservation, and want to demonstrate their environmental credentials. Jamie has strong doubts about both visions.

Jamie already knows from distressing experience that anything less than covenants or purchase do not work for long to conserve nature on farming properties. In the 1990s he was contracted by the Commonwealth environmental department of the time (there is no point in remembering the names of these departments as they change so frequently), to write a grassland recovery plan for Tasmania. In light of his observations on the uselessness of good intentions, he prescribes a revolving fund, anonymous participation in auctions, covenanting and reselling, combined with a permanently appointed advocate for grassy ecosystem conservation working in the Midlands to look out for opportunities and try to avert disasters.

The Commonwealth bureaucrats do not like Jamie’s plan because it does not involve ‘the rural community’ as a ‘full partner’, so reject it. This decision is unfortunate, as his plan would have worked well to conserve grassy ecosystems, at a low fraction of the ineffective Commonwealth expenditure that has taken place since, and without upsetting the locals.
Since Jamie’s rejected plan, huge project after huge project, with innovative titles like ‘Landscape Logo’, dragging Bayesian Belief Nets behind them, have beset the Midlands graziers with earnest visitors to be educated. The graziers have also been showered with money to do good works in the context of laboriously created strategies. Despite all this activity, none of the private grasslands are secure beyond a decade or two, except for a few small patches that were caught as bycatch in forest reservation programs. The research and extension community have flourished, without solving the problem. In fact, although none would consciously think that way, it is probably not in their interest to do so.

Native grassland and grassy woodland on The Quoin

There are several properties with excellent grasslands that are sold cheaply after Jamie’s plan is rejected. Some of these grasslands are destroyed by the new owners. More grasslands are destroyed in panic when the Commonwealth unwisely goes through the protracted process of listing under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

The usefulness of listing for actually protecting grasslands can be measured by the Brighton Bypass, which destroys a large proportion of the remaining grasslands on basalt. The governments
pretends that the purchase of another patch with many of the same threatened species is an offset for the loss, but the reality is that one cannot offset for the loss of an area containing particular species and communities by ‘saving’ another such area, as the total area inevitably decreases and there is no security in the ‘saving’, which can be offset itself if needed for a development.

The negative effect of the development is then compounded by excluding sheep from the offset, thus almost guaranteeing the disappearance of most of the threatened small herbs.

Jamie’s doubts about the possibilities of increasing profitability by conserving nature relates to the conserving nature part. He can see many ways in which graziers could potentially make money from their nature, including conservation management payments, landscape walks between colonial accommodation, and nature-friendly certified wool. He is just dubious about the likelihood of the nature conservation part of it being able to persist through property ownership and market changes without permanent legal restrictions on clearance. As one of the graziers pointed out to Jamie, land that is not worth much now because it can only be used to graze 0.5 of a dry sheep equivalent per ha in a poor wool market, might be the lucrative olive grove of the future.

Jamie was in a state of despair on grassland conservation and still is. His main reasons for being involved in the project were not because he believed it would help very much to conserve anything, but to document the natural values of the properties before they were destroyed, and to be able to continue to employ Kerry Bridle, who had helped him in his research after Louise left his employ to work in PWS.

It is to be a rough ride. The project team is part of a nationwide program run by Jann Williams through LWA. Jann efficiently
organises frequent meetings of all the research groups involved in the program, meetings also attended by other LWA and AWI staff.

Part way into the project there is a putsch in AWI. The new controllers of the funding body are highly suspicious of the Tasmanian research and insist on eliminating some of the planned outputs and outcomes. These reductions include the program to set up environmental certification processes, which is not really research anyway.

Jamie manages to talk them into allowing the project to transmogrify into an analysis of the relationships between people, sheep and nature conservation, which is to be produced as a book. They agree because they like the fact that research from Jamie’s team had shown that heavy grazing by sheep was necessary to maintain some of the most threatened plants in the Midlands, and that sheep-grazed native pastures were in better condition than those on roadsides.

They and the other graziers are really nice people, who just have slightly different value frameworks than Jamie, just like the foresters. They are certainly nicer people than the conservationist who exchanged his old Trangia for Jamie’s new one when he passed through the camp at Lake Ewart en route to Eldon Bluff, or the other prominent conservationist who censored Jamie’s interview with Helen Gee in her forest history book because he did not follow the current Wilderness Society line.

However, one of the AWI employees is not even as nice as these conservationists. The sheep book was a monumental task that takes up all of one of Jamie’s study leaves to write. Both LWA and AWI insist on vetting and editing the text after it had been usefully edited and refereed by a subset of the graziers.

The AWI reader is abusive in his comments. He particularly wants to remove any reference to mulesing from the text. Mulesing
involves tearing fleece and flesh from around the anus of a sheep without anaesthetic, to prevent blowflies laying their eggs in wool-trapped poo. Mulesing avoids dooming animals to slow death by maggot, by subjecting them to briefer agony by knife.

Animal welfare groups like PETA campaign for the elimination of the procedure. The book that Jamie and Kerry write is largely based on semi-structured interviews with graziers. The conversations between Kerry Bridle and the graziers wander in order to understand motivations, feelings and attitudes as well as physical interactions with sheep and the rest of the landscape. In writing up these interviews Jamie wants to accurately reflect this rich material, so organises the book to report every type of thing they say, with copious direct quotes. He tries not to be judgemental in any way, which is difficult for him.

Field day – a chance to distribute products

Mulesing is not mentioned by most graziers. Jamie quotes one who sees it as possible to avoid mulesing if necessary and another who
wants to destroy PETA. These quotes are in the context of a discussion on market perceptions in the last chapter, which is on the future of the runs. Jamie refuses to change the chapter. Jann Williams manages to persuade AWI that their reader has overstepped the mark. The book is published. The Tasmanian graziers seem to like it. The hordes of researchers who follow the pioneering work of Jamie’s research group on nature conservation in the Midlands largely ignore it; after all, where would we be if we could not interminably repeat research on such a lucrative problem? Not much more than the sheep book comes out of the project. Jamie still has not got rid of all the early ‘products’ so expensively produced from zero data.

A time-consuming large field experiment with many sites designed to look at the effects of different grazing regimes was located on a particular large property at the request of the grazier, who ended up being passive resistant to providing any stocking data and who changed the grazing regime on several of the sites during the course of the experiment.

Kerry and Louise both continue their engagement with the graziers, but Jamie has enough of research projects funded by people who, he thinks, do not want real research to happen and are only interested in public relations, so he successfully builds up a case for funding from the Australian Research Council for a project that does not involve any private landholders and is devoid of other stakeholders poised above his heart. The ARC still seems to vaguely believe that research, in itself, is worthwhile, despite ‘national priorities’ being one of the criteria.
Tussock and lawn grassland as bycatch in a reserve in the Midlands
CHAPTER FIFTEEN
THE NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST AND NOT CARING FOR COUNTRY

Back to Canberra

In the noughties, much to his surprise, Jamie receives a phone call from a Commonwealth bureaucrat, enquiring whether he would be interested in being a member of the Natural Heritage Trust Advisory Council (NHTAC). This august body had been set up to provide advice on the disbursement of the funds devoted to conservation that had flowed from the sale of Telstra by the Howard government. Jamie’s curiosity is piqued, as he has never advised a federal Liberal government. He tells her he will do it.

A few days later he emerges from security inspection into the politician’s part of Parliament House in Canberra. He joins a motley crew of nondescript to immensely overweight men and women, who turn out to be the rest of the committee. The current bureaucrat who looks after the committee, a contrast to the rest of the assembled mass in her nattiness and slimness, shepherds the committee to a meeting with the Ministers. Peter Cullen shuffles slowly in the rear.

Jamie had known Peter as a slim youth in Melbourne. He first came across his over-mature stage at a Land and Water Australia gathering in a country house near Canberra where Peter and Jamie were both giving opinions on the desirable future path for LWA research.

Peter’s fluting voice delivers incisive logic from his sea elephant frame, logic limited by the feasible. Jamie’s logic tends to relate to what needs to be done for nature conservation rather than the
feasible, so Peter’s agenda does better. Peter is the representative of water conservation in Australia, one of WWF’s Wentworth Group of Scientists pushing for environmental flows in the Murray-Darling Basin, and the Director of a Co-operative Research Centre dedicated to water use and conservation. By the time Jamie meets him again in Parliament House, Peter is retired from a full time job. He wanders the halls of Parliament House talking to politicians on behalf of the Wentworth Group.

The NHTAC is chaired by Sir James Hardy, from the wine, rather than the asbestos, business. His aristocratic affability undoubtedly hides greater depths. The main function of the meeting in Parliament House is to be briefed on the Australian Environmental Audit, funded by the Natural Heritage Trust, but now needing its funding renewed. One of the members of the committee is a strong proponent of this program because he devised it. Jamie thinks that that its products are pretty average and not much of an outcome for all that money. However, given that the two ministers are there and he does not really understand what is going on, he does not interject to point out that maps with straight line boundaries between natural classes cannot really be trusted. Sir James has no such inhibition, knowing a bit about maps from his outstanding career in competitive yachting.

In the formal part of the meeting Jamie suggests that there are many groups within the Commonwealth bureaucracy engaged in producing electronic maps, and that it would probably be more efficient, and almost certainly result in better products, to have just one.

The bureaucrats servicing NHTAC begin to realise that they might have made a mistake in at least one of their appointments. The committee, however, is not totally a creature of the bureaucracy. The ministers like to meet it frequently over meals in which there are frank exchanges of views within the limits of the necessary
sycophancy. Ministers are the ones who make the decisions on the disbursement of the large sums of money from the sale of Telstra after receiving the Committee’s advice, so want to be involved before the advice is written, so the committee knows what to advise.

At one dinner meeting after quite a few excellent wines, one of the ministers offers to give members a look at John Howard’s prime ministerial office. It is very large and very black leathery, garnished with Boonie and other cricket figurines. The desk is huge with many small drawers. It was made for Menzies. It had been retrieved from storage by Howard to replace the arty desk made from rainforest timbers that was part of the new Parliament House design. Menzies’ desk is partly draped with the Australian flag.

The ministerial tour guide is in awe of John Howard, and even more so of Sir James, for his yachting prowess. The guide is later forced to nobly fall on his sword to steady the Liberal ship in some long-forgotten political crisis. Ministers are not quite as ephemeral as bureaucrats, but the members of NHTAC do not get the chance to get bored with them before a new one arrives.

The NHT2 program is in an almost total mess when Jamie joins the advisory committee. In the NHT1 program, an enormous amount of money is disbursed to a large number of very small projects and various ‘Care’ organisations, with Tasmania getting a huge share as part of the deal to get the vote of Brian Harradine in the Senate. This money supports an enormous volunteer effort in sustainable land management wherever there are people who believe in it.

The main result of all this activity is that State conservation bureaucracies are downsized even further than has already been the case. There are also lots of new signs in the landscape. However, some of the funds are effectively used to purchase land for
conservation reserves, and a tiny bit is used to support threatened species conservation in places where there are no ‘Care’ groups.

There is a lot of criticism of NHT1. It is argued in parliament that it is ineffective, non-strategic and pork-barrelling. So, for NHT2, a decision is made to set up Natural Resource Management (NRM) Boards as a delivery and partnership mechanism on a regional basis, and to require each of these boards to develop a strategy to be certified by the Commonwealth before they can have any funds to do anything. The ‘Care’ and community groups are totally cut off from funding while this process is underway. The most charitable interpretation of this change is that it resulted from monumental political and environmental stupidity on the part of the decision-makers. It was environmentally stupid because environmental improvement involves constancy of effort over long time periods, being easily destroyed by one brief lapse of attention. It was politically stupid because it alienated almost all of the people who had volunteered in the cause of ecological sustainability. Most of them had already spent much of their valuable time commenting on the innumerable strategies that had been developed as part of NHT1 and just want to plant trees or place jute on eroding dunes in their area with a bit of administrative support, rather than develop a new strategy for a larger region for the undemocratic NRM Boards. Those who do not just withdraw from involvement are spitting with rage.

The NHTAC flies around the country to get feedback for the ministers on the changes, so it cops a lot of spittle. Peter Cullen competently chairs most of these meetings. There are not only disenchanted front line volunteers, but also NRM Boards disenchanted with the Commonwealth processes.

Jamie begins uncharitably to suspect that the whole baroque NHT2 system is a mechanism to avoid any criticism of the bureaucrats who had the misfortune to dwell a few months in the relevant
departments on their way back to Treasury or Prime Ministers or another less difficult department. They are not going to cop the NHT1 criticism, the solution being systems that set up paralysis, so nothing is done.

The view from Jamie’s room at a NHTAC meeting in Surfers Paradise

Jamie gains evidence consistent with this theory when NHTAC advises the Minister that three monthly reporting requirements for NRM Boards are counterproductive to environmental outcomes. The bureaucrat of the time produces a 100 point check list to be ticked off before such reports can be avoided.

One thing the bureaucrats are very good at is organising great venues for meetings, great meals and first class transport in between. This luxury is some minor consolation for coping the abuse for a misconceived system.
After the community consultation, the ministers are sharp enough to realise that they need to do something to tidy up the political mess. They reinstate a small grants scheme outside the aegis of the NRM Boards, called the Envirofund, and give new money to the Boards to employ people to liaise with and help community groups.

Eventually, the NRM Boards begin to function well enough for the bureaucrats to become confident enough to send them money to actually do things, in partnerships of course. A considerable sum of money is designated for projects that are relevant to more than one NRM Board. This money is effectively one off, so calls are made for proposals to spend it in the usual impossibly short time frames. NHTAC provides advice on who should be funded, so Jamie’s back yard chalet fills with paper representing other people’s NRM dreams, many of which he was doomed to destroy.

His dream is that his committee could find a way to ensure the survival of the species cowering in fast-disappearing remnants of the original vegetation in agricultural landscapes. Jamie does not write an application for it, but rather a paper for the NHTAC on how it could be done.

Jamie’s paper transmogrifies into an NHTAC paper, which eventually is exposed to the ministers, against the urgings of the bureaucrats. It argues that the only way to achieve long term conservation of biodiversity in agricultural landscapes is to have a combination of permanent reservation of remnants and other habitat on titles and a system that pays landowners to achieve conservation targets on this land.

The stewardship payments prove attractive to the ministers, who are met over lunch. ‘We could just put all the NHT money into these’ says one, possibly thinking about the bottom line of his grazier uncle. The NHTAC committee members are not all that keen on this extreme option for conservation funding, so back-
pedal furiously. Nothing is done within the NHT framework. However, the idea, which Jamie publishes in his sheep book, does not totally die.

In 2013, the Myer Foundation, in almost all-enveloping partnerships, begins funding a stewardship payment program in the northern Midlands of Tasmania. The potentially fatal problem is that the agreements are short term, allowing the landowners to change their mind if they perceive that there are more profitable things to do with their conservation land, but they are better than nothing and a more secure system might develop if a funder forces it in times of economic hardship.

Just as the NRM system gets going to the extent that there is something being done for nature, albeit minor in comparison to the effort going into transactions, the politicians and bureaucrats shift into review mode. After all, the system is more than three years old. The NHTAC finds itself defending a system its members would not have recommended in the first place, to avoid the massive disruption to the efforts of well-intentioned people that would inevitably result from yet another change. The attendance of the NHTAC at the nationwide meetings of the chairs of the NRM Boards makes the committee realize that the boards are now a political force, almost a fourth tier of government, distinct from the other tiers of government in their lack of electoral accountability.

Indeed, the NRM Boards survive the defeat of the Howard Government, unlike the NHTAC which is abolished because it does not fit the new priorities of the Rudd Government. These priorities are set out in the Caring for Country program, overseen by the lead singer of the Midnight Oils, Peter Garrett.

The members of NHTAC get a thank you letter from Peter Garrett a year or two after their last meeting. In the interim, Peter Cullen suffers a death even more sudden than that of the committee. Jamie
wonders how much his death was due to the disheartening sudden change of political context, in which WWF and the Wentworth Group had lost much of their influence, to be replaced as effective lobbyists by the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Wilderness Society.

**On not caring for country**

Jamie meets Peter Garrett for the first time when he and Jamie speak at the launch of the Egg Island Reserve of the Tasmanian Land Conservancy. Peter is not an outstandingly coherent speaker but radiates in a positive and friendly manner, especially when induced to row a wooden boat out to the island for the television cameras. A local child, possibly a fan of the Oils, spontaneously grabs the microphone to say nice things about him. Jamie gets a moment to tell Peter how great the program for helping buy new reserves is for nature conservation, unlike most of the expenditure of NHT funds. Peter smiles at Jamie in a slightly larrikin way and says nothing.

Although Jamie would rather spend a day with Peter Garret than any of the many other ministers he has met, Peter’s program was less effective in achieving the conservation of species and communities than that of the late Howard years.

One of the few good things that can be said about those on the conservative side of politics is that they are less prone to really believe in cosmic theories than the rest. Even neoliberal economic theory gets short shrift if it interferes with the electoral or pecuniary prospects of the ruling class. NHTAC has a few ecologically literate people, most of whom have a healthy cynicism about ecological dogma. Grandiose projects to increase landscape connectivity or to focus on size rather than content are treated with well-deserved contempt, in favour of projects designed to directly
ensure the future of species and communities. The advice that Peter Garrett gets from his companion environmental NGOs is that the highest priority in Australian nature conservation is to prevent the development of the largest natural areas, mostly in central and northern Australia. Indigenous Australians could be helped to return to their rightful place as custodians of nature.

Multi-authored scientific articles appear extolling the virtues of size and connectivity. A few even suggest that spending money on threatened species is a waste of resources. We are told that we need to save large landscapes so all species can be saved. This thinking is deranged.

The northern Australian intact landscapes that they want to save to achieve this goal are in the process of experiencing a wave of local extinctions of native mammals. Ecosystem transforming invasions of African grasses and South American toads are also taking place. Jamie is upset that Peter Garrett refuses to fund a small amount to undertake explicit and well-conceived actions to save an offshore island species from impending extinction, at the same time that nothing much happens to increase the security of natural ecosystems in northern Australia, a security that, by itself, would not have prevented extinctions in this region.
A pretty well connected northern Australian landscape from first class seat on way to NHTAC meeting in Darwin.
CHAPTER SIXTEEN
GARDENING FOR NATURE

Research and conservation

By the mid noughties everyone in academia has a web page, advertising themselves and their products. Looking for a photo for his, Jamie finds a black and white shot a second year student took of him in his long dark coat, his head obscured under a black umbrella, unfacilitating learning on the field techniques unit. In his advertising blurb Jamie writes that he is interested in research that helps the conservation of nature or amuses him.

Jamie had done quite a bit of research that helped nature a bit when showered with funds as a young academic, at a time in which nature conservation was seen as worthy and the university administration did not seem to care what academics did with their time. Jamie has also done a lot of research just to satisfy his curiosity about things. He is not certain that he will be able to continue this serendipitous
course of inquiry as funds for environmental research dry up and
the phalanx of university upper administrators grow in number and
fang length, especially as he has finally been able to relieve himself
of the burden of school headship, a burden that had possibilities for
influence he would no longer enjoy.

He has long assumed that he should be getting competitive grants,
which seem to bring extra money into his school and gain brownie
points from those who judge research prowess. His struggle is to
keep the numbers of grants down, as each grant creates a burden of
bureaucratic activity and staff supervision that cut into time for the
enjoyable aspects of research.

He does not enjoy the writing of grant applications, which are now
exercises in fiction constrained by font size, on-costs and double-
guessing of referee responses. It was not always so. His first grant
applications are written in a couple of hours. They are invariably
successful.

Now it takes weeks to construct elaborate fantasies, which, as often
as not, are summarily and insultingly rejected: ‘Kirkpatrick’s
productivity has reduced in the last few years. His publications are
not in the best journals. His background review has ignored the
most important work in the field (mine)’. Nevertheless, Jamie is
lucky enough to get a three year grant from the Australian Research
Council in 2006 and another in 2009. One referee for the 2006 grant
slightly prematurely predicts that ‘This will be Kirkpatrick’s swan
song’.

The 2006 project is the one in which Steve Leonard, Jamie and Jon
Marsden-Smedley unexpectedly discover that grazing, at least
grazing by wallabies, can increase blazing in tussock grasslands by
increasing the proportion of dead shoots.

The 2009 grant is to find out what causes the birth and death of
urban trees. This latter quest for knowledge was initially more on
the side of amusing research than a contribution to nature conservation, although the research on gardens that formed the base for the work showed some amusing things that are also relevant to nature conservation.

**Gardening for nature conservation**

At the time of the application for the 2009 ARC grant one of the most amusing things Jamie’s research group had found out was that the gardeners who are most concerned about conserving the bush and most love native gardens have many more bush-invasive weeds in their gardens than those gardeners who are indifferent to the bush and like gardens full of exotic plants. However, it does not matter much practically, as their data also indicate that most weeds are moving both ways, from the gardens to the bush, and from the bush to the gardens, many enthusiastically carried by multispecies flocks of native birds.

About the time this discovery is made, Jamie has the good fortune to attract Grant Daniels into garden research. After Grant’s dad dies he helps out his mother by looking after their garden on acreage down on South Arm. He knows his garden plants well. He is also a bird lover, with excellent identification skills.

Jamie suggests that he should try to find out whether the species composition and structure of individual gardens affects the composition and abundance of birds. Many researchers are saying that it is landscape characteristics that influence bird species, and that, if you want to support native bird species you need to have native gardens. Grant sits in many a front and back garden in Hobart observing the reality.

The native birds prove to eat, perch on and nest in both exotic and native garden plants, although the exotic birds prefer exotic plants. Grant and Jamie are also able to demonstrate that adjacent different
types of gardens have very different assemblages of birds. Despite their publication of these findings in 2006, the ecological mythologies that they reject are still frequently touted, by scientists as well as the more practically inclined.

The idea that we should promote the interests of native birds and animals by promoting the planting of native gardens, and particularly native trees, is hard to shift. In fact, success in this mission could reduce the diversity of native bird species, in the same way that having the same management in all rural vegetation remnants reduces biotic diversity. Luckily, as Grant and Jamie further explore the relationships between gardens and the attitudes and actions of people, they also find out that there is no way that such a conversion could happen in Australia.

In the bird study Jamie and Grant classify plant species lists from the gardens into distinct groups that they give names like complex native garden, woodland garden, productive garden, complex flower garden and minimal input garden. They are keen to discover to what degree these garden types are determined by the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the resident, location in relation to the CBD and coast, and environment. Grant drives around looking at randomly selected front gardens. Each is placed in one of the garden classes, to which Grant and Jamie add the ‘non-garden’, a type absent from the initial sample for the bird study.

The non-garden consists of tightly mown lawn and concrete, with the only taller growth emerging from places into which a mower cannot penetrate. This type of garden is associated with suburbs with the highest unemployment rates.

The most common type is the exotic shrub garden, characterised by well-pruned shrubs, concrete edges and a lack of trees and flowers.
This type is concentrated in suburbs with low household incomes and very low levels of tertiary educational attainment.

*Grant Daniels in a complex native garden*

It appears that people with tertiary education prefer the more complex and untidy woodland gardens. If they are not working they mix productive gardens with their woodland gardens. Richer people like trees more than poorer people. However, their gardens are much tidier in the understorey if they lack tertiary education. These strong associations are not invariant, just statistically valid. In all suburbs there are most garden types. Jamie looks at his own half acre garden and realises that his sojourn in California in the second half of 1975 has left him with multiple personality disorder, but most gardens he sees fit neatly within one of the thirteen classes.

In the United States and Canada the prevailing wisdom is that front garden style and content is contagious, with neighbours having more similar gardens than those further away. Grant and Jamie find
that Hobart house occupants do not behave like Americans are supposed to. Rather they treat their front gardens as expressions of their individuality, taste or abhorrence of the act of domestic work; as external living rooms. They do, however, find that particular architectural styles were associated with particular types of gardens, like the architect-designed corrugated iron house with native tussock grasses.

In 2006 Jamie effectively self-publishes, at great expense, a book on gardens entitled ‘Ecologies of Paradise’ that he writes as a recreational activity for many years. It is not your normal sort of garden book, looking at gardens from a variety of perspectives, including the radical, and decorated with black and white photographs and Christina’s haiku and poems. Some people really like it, but, not surprisingly in retrospect, it fails to take off as a best seller. It is written to amuse Jamie, not reviewers or the general public, pretty much like this book, of which you are probably one of the ten readers who will ever make it to this sentence.

**Understanding arboricide**

It is easy to understand why people kill trees in the countryside. The victims of arboricide are either worth heaps in their dead state, or are in the way of other money-making activities, like growing crops. Jamie applies for an ARC grant because he wants to know why trees are planted and killed in the urban forests and woodlands of Australia.

His rationale for getting public money is his realization that trees are as much a part of the urban fabric as houses, roads and supermarkets and provide a wide range of ecological and economic services at little cost. Lots of people in cities love trees enough to cut up rough when the authorities or their neighbours want to cut them down and others appear to hate them, resisting any attempts
to plant their arboreal enemies and lobbying for removal. This project is Jamie’s first prolonged research interception with the new cultural geography, as represented by Aidan Davison, a co-investigating colleague in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies. He listens to much new cultural geography when attending the conferences of the Institute of Australian Geographers. He concludes that its proponents are averse to numbers and overly fond of language creation.

The ‘more than human’ concept is particularly puzzling when first encountered, as if the second head on a Tasmanian was that of a domestic animal. Jamie also finds out that those in the ‘cultural turn’ are capable of developing types of understanding of human reality that could not be gained from more traditional science and social science, by focusing on the particular more than the general. Aidan starts off his academic and working life as a hard scientist and drifts to the other extreme. Jamie covers the same stretch of water, drifting in the opposite direction. They drift back a bit and meet bemusedly in the middle.

Jamie and Aidan, with the help of Grant, find out lots of interesting things about trees in towns and the ways in which people perceive them and treat them. There is a lot of fear and loathing out there. Jamie first notices it when there is a random spate of fatalities on the Arthur Highway, mostly involving people speeding and being on the wrong side of the road in cars not built for survival of occupants in head on collisions.

In one of the accidents, the car ends up embracing one of the black gums that had been allowed, by default, to survive between tarmac and paddock. All the fatalities are obviously the fault of the trees lining the formerly rather pleasant narrow winding road between Hobart and Port Arthur. The flickering light through their foliage hypnotises people into driving too fast and cutting corners. The deaths could not possibly be the fault of the drivers or a random
misfortune. In a society in which someone or something always has to be at fault for human morbidity and mortality, trees are a great scapegoat. Lots of trees die by chainsaw and bulldozer as punishment for the road deaths, with appropriate fantasy offsets for the loss of swift parrot habitat.

The remaining trees on or near the Arthur Highway probably thought they were safe. Unfortunately, in 2013, a farmer burns off and, unknown to him, the fire continues to smoulder in the base of a stump. A few days later there is one of those days when fire is unstoppable.

Even the arsonists are too scared to light one, but away it goes from the stump towards the Tasman Peninsula along the line of the Arthur Highway, taking out half the buildings it encounters, burning fences and killing stock. Shit, those bloody trees are at it again. Down they come without even a sniff of an offset.

The government, particularly Parks and Wildlife, are blamed for not burning the bush enough or for stopping landowners from burning bush because of a misplaced attachment to threatened species. Connection with reality is not a great feature of public discourse after fires. Apart from the almost total absence of PWS land from the area burned, to stop fires spreading on catastrophic days like this, the landscape would have to be concreted, and not just a little area. The fire leaps across broad bays and burns through apparently bare paddocks. Once it starts you just have to get out of the way. No past burning of bush or felling of trees will help.

A first year student of Jamie’s from the worst hit town measures tree cover around houses before and after the fire. There is no relationship between tree cover and the survival of a house. It is random in relation to tree cover but contagious in terms of location. Great balls of fire have dropped from the sky.
A cyclone hits Townsville, destroying houses and uprooting trees. The arborists reckon that trees, on average, protect houses, especially those that are not uprooted. Non-uprooted trees are felled right and left. They had been obviously awaiting their chance to wreak havoc in the next storm. Another storm causes disarray in Brisbane, and controversy when the tree-friendly council decides to fell some. Tree-haters hit the blogs:

'Don't forget trees are so dangerous to drivers as well. With the number of drivers killed each year by those rouge [sic - rogue] trees, if trees were crocs [crocodiles] you would cull the lot of them. It is not speed that kills, it is the sudden stop at the tree that does it.'

Despite many such entertainments in the blogosphere, the tree death researchers only find one or two people in their interview sample of over 700 who seem unabashed tree haters, although they do find a lot more who probably are and try to conceal it.

There are also heaps of people who quite like trees when they are not near them, but are scared of trees close up, a propensity encouraged by intensive reporting of any death or damage from tree or limb fall in the media, and by insurance advertisements. In one of their papers, Aidan and Jamie point out that the death rate among non-loggers from trees in Australia is about one in 17.5 million per year, easily beaten by toasters. Jamie suspects that this rate is increasing as the weather gets more ratchety, but is still not high. Pre-emptive strikes on trees, aka land sharks, have become more frequent, with arborists wielding devices that purport to be able to tell if trees have internal rot, which is a sentence of impending doom, for the tree.

Despite all this scapegoating, the interviews tell the researchers that trees in gardens are mainly cut down by those who are fond of them. A portion of this treehem is attributable to the unfortunate tendency of many trees to get sick, then die. People usually euthanase them before the final curtain falls because they look so
awful. Jamie has to admit that he has been partly responsible for quite a bit of tree euthanasia, as wattles and gums he planted more than three decades ago began to hand in their dinner pails after two decades, when competition for moisture got a bit much or they reached the end of their natural lives.

Christina and Jamie, along with many others, have trees cut down or pruned that appear, from large and growing cracks in their trunks and branches, to be about to fall. They have even removed healthy trees to extend their vegetable garden and to reduce shade and leaf fall on their house. They and the rest of nature planted too many trees for all to survive on a half acre block. Yet, these causes of tree death are probably minor in comparison to the havoc caused by ideology and fashion. It appears that most trees that are killed by people in suburbia are victims of variation in personal preferences. Australians, on average, move house every eight years or so. Each individual loves some types of trees and is prepared to replace others, either because they dislike them, or because they are in the way of having the trees they like.

Tree removal occurs at the same time as the repainting of the lounge room. Native tree lovers remove exotic trees, people who want productive trees remove non-productive trees and people who like deciduous trees remove evergreens. There are few species of trees that most people like. These constitute the big trees in gardens. The Norfolk Island pine appears to be one, pear trees another. Eucalypts are not one, the surviving large trees gradually disappearing from the suburbs enmeshed in bush, to be replaced by more diminutive non-locals.

So what use are living things in cities for nature conservation? To start off with, cities support plant species that are threatened or extinct in their native habitat. The trees along the roads near Jamie’s local shopping centre are dawn redwoods, long extinct in
the wild. A lot of threatened plant species are native weeds that need a combination of conditions rarely found outside cities.

In the Domain parkland, right next to the Hobart CBD, a rare native daisy is found under deodar cedar trees. Then, there are the rare bird species, like peregrine falcons, that nest and hunt the urban canyons. The urban heat island and the profusion of fruit all year round make cities a great place for frugivores and the predators of frugivores. Rare owls hang around botanical gardens to grab the possums that eat the fruit. Rare predators, like the grey goshawk, hunt the cloud of rats, sparrows and starlings around domestic chook yards. Rare mammals can penetrate deep into cities, as with the Tasmanian devils recently observed in the inner suburbs of Hobart.

Trees keep temperatures equable and imbibe excess moisture, thereby saving heaps of money and preventing the production of greenhouse gases. They soak up greenhouse gases as they grow.
rapidly, fed by the nutrients that are a byproduct of urban activity. The bits of bush enveloped in Australian cities have many rare or threatened species in them, not all from Australia, like the rare South African gladiolus in Kings Park.

From the late 1970s urban people rallied to protect their native species and the native bush. By 2013, the Sandringham Reserve, the deterioration of which Jamie had documented in the early 1970s, had become a hybrid between bush and garden. Rare native species that had been locally extinct in the 1970s had now become common, even in environments in which they never occurred naturally. Easily removed exotic shrubs, like boneseed, had gone from ubiquitous to rare. Only OH&S regulations protected some of them where slopes were too steep to weed. The native ti-tree that form thickets over most of the area turns out to be an invader of the species-rich heathlands of Aboriginal times.

Although it looks like bush, it is anything but natural in the way that Australian conservationists define natural, the bush that was present before the European invasion.

**Perceiving the nature conservation virtues of being unnatural**

In 2014, Jamie is surprised to be invited to give a guest lecture in the Zoology Department at Latrobe University. He says yes. His surprise abates when he realises that Steve Leonard, who worked with him in Tasmania, and is now employed as a researcher there, is behind it.

Steve tells Jamie he did not expect him to say yes. Jamie’s rejections of invitations to speak or meet in the long summer during which his prostate gland was being irradiated every working day had propagated a rumour that he was past it. He did not travel because the treatment and disease meant that the one thing he could
not pass up on was a toilet, but he quickly returns to normal tinkling ratios and his 55 hour academic work week.

He takes good advantage of his irradiation time by using his sick leave to write up a backlog of papers. One of these papers is on the complexities of nature conservation management on Maria Island, off the east coast of Tasmania.

A couple of years earlier, an ex-student and occasional casual worker in Jamie’s school, Janeane Ingram, tells him about some small exclosures she placed in grassland on Maria Island three years ago, in her honours year in zoology. Jamie is interested enough to go over with her to have a look, especially since he knows that the island is one of the few places in temperate Australia where the effects of grazing by native animals are not confused by stock or feral animal grazing, and where native grazers are in such numbers that they are culled each year to prevent summer tourists from being offended by starving animals.

Janeane and Jamie have a bit of a chat and a coffee with the rangers, then borrow a vehicle to get down to the plots at French’s Farm. They are on a cleared black gum flat covered by a treeless marsupial lawn, apparently consisting almost entirely of native species and dominated by wallaby grass. Large tree seedlings struggle to get out of the wire of the small exclosures, which are otherwise largely filled by an exotic grass, redtop.

Next they look at a double-fenced eight year old exclosure, built as a holding pen for Tasmanian devil insurance populations. Tall tussock grasses and trees have replaced marsupial lawn. The wombats, wallabies and kangaroos are not only keeping exotic plants at bay, but are also stopping the grasslands on which they rely from becoming thickets of eucalypt, wattle and prickly box.

The lawn grasslands are not natural. They have replaced vineyards, prisons and paddocks, which earlier replaced eucalypt forest.
Despite being unnatural, the grasslands support populations of threatened, and potentially threatened, species, like the Forester kangaroo, the pademelon and the Tasmanian devil. However, the most threatened species that most rely on Maria Island are two birds, the forty-spotted pardalote and the swift parrot, both of which use the types of eucalypt trees that were cleared.

![Wombat maintaining lawn on Maria Island](image)

To complicate matters further, the marsupial lawns protect world heritage listed convict era buildings from the fires that would surely destroy them if surrounded by flammable eucalypt forest. They also protect the remaining habitat of the threatened birds, by acting as large fire breaks.

Janeane and Jamie suggest eucalypt plantings for the birds on well-watered river flats that have been taken over by willows and
maintenance of the marsupial lawn as the best solution, but they are not certain that the recent introduction of the threatened Tasmanian devil will reduce herbivore populations, or change their activities, to the extent that trees will start to invade. They will find out, as the devils have already begun to prosper on the initially unsuspecting rest of the wildlife.

Maria Island lawns and topiary

Jamie’s whole research career drew him to the conclusion that, to look after the rest of nature, one had to manage for the most threatened species in any local area, no matter where they came from, rather than fussing about ‘nativeness’, ‘natural environments’ or ‘landscape processes’. He argues this proposition in a much-ignored chapter in an IUCN handbook on protected area management in 2006.

In 2014, he decides to start saying it in public, firstly advancing the proposition that exotic plants can be a plus for nature conservation at a weeds conference, then devoting his Latrobe University address to the general topic of concentrating conservation on the most threatened taxa.
The people at the weed conference were either accepting of the proposition, or polite, although one did say that they had a bit of a think about the weed they were working on and decided it was not worth conserving.

Some people in the amazingly large Latrobe University audience for a Melbourne Cup Day are a bit more actively hostile to the concept. There is apparently a beast called the hog deer in the Wilsons Promontory National Park, which is both threatened in its home country and has the temerity to consume native coast banksia seedlings. A botanist expresses the opinion that the hog deer should be exterminated. Jamie replies that such a course of action values a common native species above a threatened introduced one, not a value framework that he shares.
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
THE CLIMATE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Jamie does strongly believe chauvinism in conservation needs to be rejected if there is to be any chance of maintaining anything like the number of species at present on a warming and acidifying planet that appears to be run by the fossil fuel and armament industries. Politicians and the public have a touching belief in the possibility and virtues of never-ending economic growth fueled by fossil fuels, a belief that needs desperately to become heresy, rather than a seldom-recognized delusion. Pope Francis writes words to this effect, so heresy may be on the way.

Jamie becomes aware of the ways in which human beings can affect global climate in the 1970s. In response, he devises two tutorials for his Geography first year teaching, one on nuclear winter and one on CO2 summer. It is a hard bet on the future season until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Jamie is more concerned with glacial-interglacial climatic change and its effects on refuges for plants than he is with the climate change that is actually happening right where he lives. When CSIRO scientists start raising the alarm about the threat to biodiversity of climate change, Jamie sees it as a diversion from dealing with the main issues of massive worldwide destruction of native ecosystems and the effects of introduced organisms on native ones, all symptoms of the diseases of economic and population growth, as indeed is global warming.

Jamie gives a couple of public talks about the desirability of living better with less in Adelaide and Sydney, before he fully comprehends the power of the dominant socioeconomic system to suppress alternative viewpoints without killing or jailing anyone. An ABC journalist on the green show they used to have back then
tells him that criticism of the growth paradigm is a forbidden area in their reporting.

After his realization of the futility of head on resistance to the growthists, Jamie mentions the insanity of economic growth in throwaway lines when interviewed on other subjects, makes sure that his students are aware that the planet is not infinite, and concentrates on work that helps the immediate problems of nature conservation.

In the 1980s and 1990s Jamie is worried that the predictions of climate change on which the CSIRO scientists base their warnings might prove to be wrong, given how little is really known about the workings of the planet, and therefore divert attention and resources from real issues to later discredit nature conservation as a whole.

When Jamie finally decides to have a look at data from Tasmania, he discovers that he is living climate change. The trees that had been dying all over the Midlands of Tasmania are responding to a sudden change that occurred in about 1978, when summer/autumn droughts became more pronounced in central and southeastern Tasmania. Temperatures in eastern and central Tasmania leap then and in the late 1990s in a step function.

Climate change does not appear to be occurring in western Tasmania, although Jon Marsden-Smedley picks up a late 1990s tendency for a greater area to be burned in dry lightning fires, and Huon pines on Mt Read appear to have accelerated their growth.

In the early 1980s Jamie decided that it would be a good idea to set up some long term plots, as he had no intention of going elsewhere than Tasmania, and there was not much long term ecological data available anywhere in Australia.

In 1983, Neil Gibson and Jamie carry a rather heavy Carr staff and dumpy level to survey transects through a snow patch on Mt Field that is a few hours walk from the road. Neil Gibson in his younger
manifestation is a bush-walking sylph with a thin beard and a propensity for consumption of hideously weak black tea. Luckily, he is strong as well, taking most of the load as Jamie staggers through the block streams desperately trying to balance.

In 1983, Neil Gibson and Jamie carry a rather heavy Carr staff and dumpy level to survey transects through a snow patch on Mt Field that is a few hours walk from the road. Neil Gibson in his younger manifestation is a bush-walking sylph with a thin beard and a propensity for consumption of hideously weak black tea. Luckily, he is strong as well, taking most of the load as Jamie staggers through the block streams desperately trying to balance. Jamie and Neil pick this snow patch because Neil has mapped the extent of

*Jon Marsden-Smedley measuring height of wallaby munch on native cherry*
Conservation Worrier

snow monthly for two years as he passes by on his mission to collect data on the microclimate of cushion plants from Mt Field West. When he finally gets his PhD for his cushion plant work he tells Jamie to advise any new students to choose sites close to a road.

It takes Neil and Jamie several days to do three transects. They stay in the K-Col Hut, which has to be the most uncomfortable in Tasmania and has no toilet. Jamie picks up a fungal disease that makes his head itch. His doctor exclaims in delight at the golden beauty of the fungus as he diagnoses it with an ultraviolet light.

Somewhat put off, the next time Jamie surveys the transects is in 2001, with Kerry Bridle. They camp in the alpine vegetation, as they do again in 2014. By 2014 Jamie can barely make it there and back with a pack, so thinks that he had better write up the changes.

The idea behind the transects is that snow is disappearing from Tasmania, as witness the recent lack of ski seasons on Mt Field, and that this disappearance could be expected to imperil the several plant species that rely on the rare Tasmanian snow patches for their future.

The results of the analysis are clear. Cushions and tall shrubs increase. Bare ground decreases. This seems on the surface consistent with less snow. Jamie seeks some hard data on changes in snow cover, without success. Eventually Jagannath Aryal, a colleague who is expert in remote sensing, suggests that he could analyse snow cover on Landsat images, which are now free and go back to 1983. Jane Bryan helps Jamie work out how to get to them and register, as she had been through the same process in her project of mapping rainforest clearance for oil palms.

In the first semester of 2014 Jamie is in a weird academic half world. His School of Geography and Environmental Studies has just been merged with the school that teaches and researches
agriculture. The previous academic units are both in the new School of Land and Food without anyone thinking of setting up processes to make the new school work in a practical sense.

Emma Pharo and Jamie set up informal processes for planning and Jamie manages to convince the head of the new school to adopt a few delegations, but nothing much works, especially given that the university administration decided to get rid of most school administrative staff at the same time as the merger.

Jamie is also bereft of any research funds. Since he turned 65 three years previously, Jamie has had no success with large grants, despite applying for many and having the best publications and citations of his long career. Ageism seems a likely explanation, but it might be the result of random processes or he may be deluded about his work. The big advantage of not having any grants is that he has the luxury of following his nose in his research, rather than having to produce specified outcomes and products on specified topics.

He is therefore able to divert his mind from the chaos around him by examining over a thousand Landsat images of Tasmania collected between 1983 and 2014. He notes down the mountains with snow and without it for each image on paper, as using digital manipulation of remote sensing data proves not to be feasible given the lack of many cloud-clear images. Much to his surprise, the proportion of clear days with snow on the ground at Mt Field increases between the eighties and the teenies. Thinking that there must be something wrong with the data, he seeks relationships between his Mt Field annual data and climatic data and indices, his idea being that if there are no theoretically reasonable relationships the data are probably noise.

His data are strongly predicted by Maatsuyker Island daily maximum temperatures in two winter months and various exotic
sounding climatic indices, among them the Southern Annular Mode. It thus seems that, in a warming world, western Tasmania is getting more snow, not less. Jamie looks again at the snow patch vegetation data and finds that snow patch obligate species had increased in abundance, a fact that he did not perceive when searching for data that showed how snow had disappeared. He looks at all the available climate data for western Tasmania and finds no indication of warming at all in any month of the year. These results mean that western Tasmania may be one of the most important places on the planet for long term conservation of a rich variety of native species. Jamie thinks about using them to help repel the tourism industry/Liberal Party assault on the WHA.

Snow patch on Mount Rufus looking from Lake St Clair
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
REACTION IN THE TEENIES

Arguing for nature and wilderness in the WHA

The Liberals are elected in 2014 by promising to kick greeny heads, very hard, and are endeavouring to do so to the limits of their powers. They kill the forest accord, unsuccessfully attempt to revoke the extensions to the world heritage area, try to compulsorily jail protestors and fail in an attempt to legislate to allow large companies to sue environmentalists for defamation. They also put out a call for expressions of interest for tourism developments in the WHA and other reserves. At the same time they continue a Labor government-initiated quick and dirty
revision of the management plan. Before getting kicked out of office, the Tasmanian Labor Government, with its two Green ministers apparently agreeing, decides to abolish NPWAC, and establish a small powerless Parks and Wildlife board under the direction of the Minister, but runs out of time. Possibly because its abolition is a Labor-Green idea, the Liberals keep NPWAC when elected. This decision means that NPWAC must be consulted on management plans before they are released on an unsuspecting public.

In 2014, NPWAC consists of seven members out of its notional twelve. Two of these members are Tasmanian Aborigines. There is a specialist in historical heritage, an environmental scientist, a protected area management specialist, a natural values specialist (Jamie) and Malcolm Wells, the chair. Malcolm loves orchids and has managed tourism and recreation bureaucracies most of his life. NPWAC legally has to be shown the draft, so gets some preliminary briefings from the planners who are given a few short months for a job that took years of consultation and effort on past occasions.

The Labor-Green government in collusion with the Labor Commonwealth Government wanted their WHA to be useful for economic growth through tourism, to replace the money from cutting down tall trees. They do not let the planners from the Parks and Wildlife Service become involved, appointing a bureaucrat, who had distinguished himself getting the Three Capes Walk through the planning process against much green and community resistance, to run the process, from the executive-ridden building on the wharves, not from the toxic Lands Department building, with its residual scattering of green public servants.

The bureaucrat not tainted by being in the Parks and Wildlife Service is given close direction by politically savvy bureaucratic leaders as they assemble the new plan. The plan is examined by the
politicians and possibly amended by them. NPWAC manages to improve an early draft a little, but the draft plan released for public comment still enables whatever activity the State government desires within the bounds of the WHA, with an easily influenced development approvals process. Logging is allowable in the plan over much of the WHA and wilderness is treated as a dirty word.

Jamie, among many others, takes to the media and the talk circuit, as he had been doing again since the extensions to the WHA were threatened. It is nice that it is not purely forests this time, but not so nice that even existing world heritage is threatened. Jamie participates in a counter attack that aims to extend the WHA to include the Tarkine and the Vale of Belvoir. At the same time the most important remnant grassland in Tasmania seems to be lined up to be sold for development by the Army. No-one murmurs in public, except Jamie, although many work behind the scenes.

Tourism as the new Hydro

When, in the mid teenies, a spokesperson for the tourism industry criticises conservationists for adopting the same tactics against tourism development in wild areas as they did against logging and hydro-electric development, Jamie thinks that the spokesperson is certainly evincing the same sort of arrogance and indifference to nature that roused the resistance to the dam builders, Forestry Tasmania and Gunns.

The forces of darkness now come bearing ‘ecotourism’ experiences, garnished with fine food and art. The object is the same, to profit in the short term.

The approach is the same; indifference to any notion of ecological sustainability, justified by the very jobs capitalists will get rid of if they can. If one can mine the very things that attract the tourists, why not? An Art School sits in the way of another hotel on the
wharf. Who needs an Art School in a place to which people are attracted by art?

Is a National Parks Management Plan a bit of a nuisance to a minor tourism operator? Just get the Minister to force the Parks planners to go through a protracted and time-expensive plan revision to ensure that the tourism developer’s horses will have the opportunity to crush hooded plover eggs on the half of the beach that they might not be allowed on if a new track is built for them.

Heritage and green regulations a bit of a nuisance in developing new accommodation? Launch into a process of pruning the heritage register and developing a new Statewide planning scheme to facilitate development, any development, no matter how tawdry or ugly, no matter how much it destroys Tasmania’s attractiveness.

Jamie thinks that growthism is just as bad in tourism as in any other part of The Economy. He wonders why we cannot just have a social wage, a steady state of wealth, income and population and enjoy our own places.

Travel is great in moderation, but tourism? The tourism industry project seems to be to force or lure people to pay for experiences they could get better for free.

A bureaucrat tells Jamie that he was given training in dealing with Chinese tourists in national parks. He was told that you need signs in bus parking areas in Chinese to tell the Chinese tourists to take photos here. Also needed is wireless for instant communication of selfies in the scene to everyone back home. The tourists go into hibernation on the bus between photo points.

Jamie is asked by Anne Hardy, a tourism academic, to join in some research on recreational vehicle users (RVers). Jamie suggests looking at their environmental attitudes and nature spirituality as well as their behaviours.
Most RVers turn out to be spiritually inclined environmentalists on the move, with most seeking the same nature experiences and solitude as many of those who walk in wilderness. The caricature of ‘grey nomads’ is just that. Recreational vehicles are a cheap way to get into nature for the majority who cannot afford to annoy others with helicopters or stay in an expensive resorts, of the sort that boast of a lack of television.

**Age and experience**

So here is Jamie, 70, sometimes finding it hard to believe that anything he does will help the rest of nature much. He works with some great undergraduate students, postgraduate students and colleagues doing fun things together that some like to think might help, but he cannot even get himself to stop pulling out the threatened native herbs that like his vegetable garden beds, much less convince the general populace that they need to force a remodel of their socioeconomic system and limit their shopping and breeding to keep a glorious planet full of bizarrely diverse life.

Jamie does, however, see some reasons for optimism. He has seen his species collectively change its mind about many things in his brief life.

Communism as practised in so-called ‘communist’ countries disappeared remarkably quickly, admittedly, in most cases, to be replaced by something even worse, gangster capitalism. Jamie has seen nature conservation grow from virtually nothing to an important, if unrealized, social goal over one decade, and saw women freeing themselves from some of the worst aspects of patriarchy in just a few years.

Jamie thinks that big companies are behaving so badly so frequently on so many fronts that they are losing the trust they built up through their massive propaganda exercises. He perceives a
growing rejection of the role of companies in running politics. He perceives people prepared to take their own actions to reduce global warming.

He can also see that the number and consequences of lethal events caused by global warming are steadily increasing. He feels that even without a big lethal event, the current dominance of society by big business is likely to be short-lived.

The fact of the matter is, that nations can still do what they like to the point at which other nations decide to invade them. So-called trade treaties and foreign debt can, and have been, repudiated, big international companies expelled and domestic companies forbidden to engage in propaganda and influence, all through conventional political and legal processes. People are only powerless if they think they are.

Jamie’s life learnings are meagre. He believes in being as kind as possible to other sentient beings and rocks, in being frugal in his consumption of the rest of the world and in maintaining resistance to the many evils of the corporate world. The instances in which he has helped the rest of nature a bit for a while have been largely unforeseen consequences of actions he took in despair or curiosity. So, he tentatively concludes, it may be worth acting when all seems hopeless, and following your interests even if no-one else has them.

Jamie once thought that, if you know what you want for the future, you can always make the decisions that you think are most likely to get you there, eventually. He did not make many right ones, whatever he thought at the time, but enough to keep him going, which he still is, looking forward to the unexpected.
TIME MAP

1914-1918: First World War
1939-1945: Second World War
January 1946: Betty and Barry holiday at Mt Buffalo
12 October 1946: Birth of James (Jamie) Barrie Kirkpatrick in Armidale, Melbourne
1950: Kirkpatrick family move from Elwood to 41 Tucker Rd Moorabbin
1953: Jamie at Bentleigh State School
1954-1958: Jamie at Tucker Rd State School
1955-1957: Jamie member of Church of England Boys Society (CEBS)
1956: Olympic Games in Melbourne
1956: Television starts in Melbourne
1959-1964: Jamie a pupil at Haileybury College
1962: Cuban missile crisis
1964: Jamie’s birthday not chosen from barrel, so avoids conscription for Vietnam War
1965-1968: Jamie an undergraduate student at the University of Melbourne
1966: St Kilda Football Club wins only flag ever
January 1967: Jamie marries Sue Jackson
1969-1970: Jamie a postgraduate student in Geography at the University of Melbourne
1970: Nonie born to Sue and Jamie
1971: Jamie a Demonstrator in Geography at the University of Melbourne
January 1 1972: Jamie appointed a Lecturer in Geography at the University of Tasmania
1972: Whitlam Government elected; withdraws Australian troops from Vietnam
1972-1974: Jamie collects data in West Coast Range
1973: Lake Pedder is drowned
1973-1974: Jamie is Secretary of the Tasmanian Conservation Trust Inc.
1974: Establishment of the Centre for Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania
1975, January-June: Jamie on study leave at the University of California, Riverside
1975-1977: Jamie and Stephen Harris survey Tasmanian coastal heathland
1977: Alistair born to Sue and Jamie
Summer 1977-1978: Adrian Bowden and Jamie are conquered by Mt Picton and the Eastern Arthurs

1978, July to November: Jamie on study leave at the Institute of Natural Resources, University of the South Pacific

1979: Jamie lives with Robin Haney, commences Tasmanian wetland survey

1979: Jamie invents iterative method for the selection of nature reserves and a method for quantifying wilderness loss

1979: Jamie carpeted by Vice-Chancellor for his wilderness loss analysis

1980: Jamie lives with Christina and Eldon

1983: Christina and Jamie marry

1983: High Court decision saves Franklin River from hydro-electric development

1984: Dave Bowman is Jamie’s first PhD graduate.

1985: Kath Dickinson is his second PhD graduate

1986: Jamie attends international meeting on forest conservation in China as the Australian representative.

1987-1988: Helsham Inquiry (Commission of Inquiry into the Lemonye and Southern Forests) into the extension of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

1987: Jamie appointed to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Consultative Committee to replace the deceased Dick Jones

1987: Jamie becomes Head of the Geography Department

1987: Jamie becomes Head of the School of Geography and Environmental Studies after the Geography Department and the Centre for Environmental Studies are forcibly merged

1988: Jamie is appointed Professor of Geography and Environmental Studies

1988: Jamie, Louise Gilfedder and Rod Fensham publish ‘City Parks and Cemeteries’, a book focused on the conservation of Tasmanian grassy ecosystems.

1989: State communism is so boring it starts to collapse.

1989: Hawke Government successfully nominates substantial extensions to the world heritage area.

1990: Jamie publishes method for management-related vegetation mapping

1991: The final report of the Forest Use Working Group of the Ecologically Sustainable Development Process is printed


1993: Jamie writes a rejected recovery plan for lowland Tasmanian native grasslands
1994: Jamie writes ‘The International Significance of the Natural Values of the Australian Alps’. A report to the Australian Alps Liaison Committee

1994 Jamie writes a report for the Commonwealth on the likely impacts of forest operations on world heritage values on the eastern boundary of the WHA

1995: A position paper entitled ‘National Forest Conservation Reserves – Commonwealth Proposed Criteria’ is released

1996: Jamie appointed as a member (later chair) of the Threatened Species Scientific Advisory Council of Tasmania

1997: Regional Forest Agreement outcome negotiated for Tasmania


1999: Geoff Law and Jamie produce ‘Cutting to the edge - impact of current and planned forestry operations on the integrity of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (eastern boundary)’ for Australian Greens Senator Bob Brown

1999: *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* becomes national law

2003: Report of the Scientific Advisory Panel on fire-affected grazing for Parks Victoria finalised

2003: Jamie appointed to the Natural Heritage Trust Advisory Council by Howard Government

2004: Jamie’s Dad, Barry, dies

2004 Howard’s social RFA extends the WHA again


2006: Jamie publishes “Ecologies of Paradise’, his book on gardens


2008: Howard Government voted out. NHTAC ceases meeting

2009: Global Financial Crisis

2009: Jamie gains his last Australian Research Council 3 year grant, the urban trees one

2011: Grant Daniels gains his PhD for a thesis on wildlife in exurbia. He is the 50th research higher degree student to graduate after being supervised by Jamie

2012: Jane Bryan gains her PhD for a thesis on the effects of logging on carbon in the forests of New Guinea

2013: Jamie’s best ever paper title, ‘Sinners, scapegoats or fashion victims? Understanding the deaths of trees in the green city’, hits the unsuspecting readers of *Geoforum*
2013: Forest agreement achieved by the forest industry and some conservationists, resulting in the World Heritage Area being expanded again to take in large areas of old growth forest.

2014: Government changes to radical neoliberal in both Tasmanian and Australia. Both governments are dedicated to destroying previous nature conservation gains.

2014: School of Geography and Environmental Studies merged with the Agriculture academics in a School of Land and Food. Jamie appointed Head of Discipline after 6 months of chaos.

2015: Jamie’s Mum, Betty, dies.

2015: Evil world heritage area management proposals defeated.

2016: Defence put most valuable native grassland in Tasmania on market in obvious violation of the *EPBC Act* and sell it to a farmer.

2016 Jamie publishes ‘The Tasmanian Development Calendar’, mainly to give to friends and colleagues who attended his 70th birthday symposium in October.

*Alistair Deane, Carly Rusden and Grace after helping Jamie measure alpine rope rush circles in December 2016*
More about the author

The author of this book lives in Sandy Bay, Hobart with Christina, Tor and Pippin and a passing population of many other animals and birds. He is an academic in the School of Land and Food of the University of Tasmania where he teaches _Space, Place and Nature, Natural Environment Field Techniques_ and _Fire, Weeds and Ferals_ and supervises honours and postgraduate research projects. He is presently obsessed with the geography of place attachment and the genesis of alpine rush circles and ponds.

These are some of the books he has written or co-written:


